IronWatch

Issue
05

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ABYSSAL TIDINGS

A Message from the Editor

Welcome to a new year, and with it, a new issue of IRONWATCH! To help herald in the new year, we have a whole host of stories for you, along with a continuation of the Dreadball Ad Design Competition! In addition, there's a brand-new Kings of War RPG system for your playing pleasure, and a scenario for Warpath where your armies seek to investigate ruins of crashed drones that could explode at any moment!

I'd like to let those of you just joining us know that if you are interested, you too can join and contribute articles, model pictures, scenarios, special rules, or whatever fits your fancy! No previous experience required! Just look for us on the Mantic Forums and contact us to find out how you can submit your articles for inclusion in the magazine!

As always, whether you're a first-time reader or have been with us since the start, thanks for reading, and Welcome to the Watch!

-Austin

Please note that, while we here at **Ironwatch** *attempt to deliver you the best products and ideas we can, we cannot guarantee the balance of any scenarios or special rules presented herein. If you find any errors, grammar mistakes, or rule imbalances, please contact us on the Mantic Forums (Look for the discussion labeled "Ironwatch Issue X Feedback") and let us know what we could do to improve your fan-produced magazine. If you are interested in writing, illustrating, or editing for our magazine, please let us know on the feedback discussion as well so you can get in on the action!*

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Cover art by Boris Samec
Title art by Mark Smith

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UPCOMING NEWS FROM MANTIC GAMES!

Ironwatch Exclusive Competition: Help design advertisements for Dreadball!

Good moooooorning Sports Fans!

We here at the DBCN are looking for the next bout of advertisement for the DreadBall.com website.

We're looking for funky, comical banner advertisements 160x600 pixels that are grounded in reality and mixed with a little DreadBall flair.

Submit your designs to Chris Palmer, Mantic Web and Events Coordinator, at chris.palmer@manticgames.com, and the best submission will be used on the DreadBall.com website. Please do not use imagery from any other manufacturer or fictional universe.▪imagery from any other manufacturer or fictional universe.▪

Gabe Striker Model
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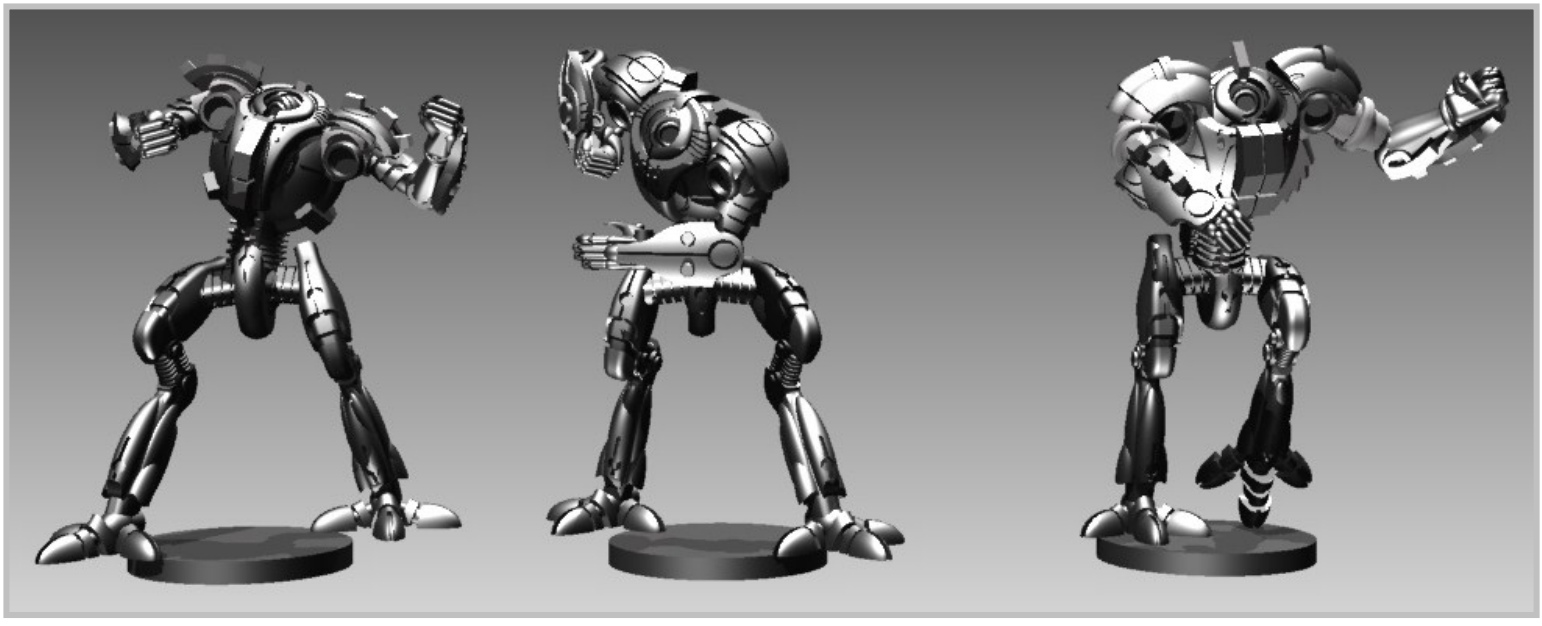

Robot Team Renders
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The Keep in the Forest

A TALE FROM THE KINGS OF WAR RPG

By Jonathan Hicks

By Darren Lysenko

The companions spread out in a line, not more than ten paces from each other, and descended into the valley. The town at the bottom had all but vanished; there were some traces of buildings, foundations of larger ones and rubble from others, but very little to suggest that a settlement once existed here. As they passed through there was evidence of a dried-up stream and the thick stone of a road running along the base of the valley. It had cracked and split as ferns and weeds pushed their way up into the light, and the roots of new trees had heaved the stones and rocks to one side. The wild had reclaimed the valley floor.

They then began the ascent up the other side of the valley. Although Tere had suggested patience he had also taken his shortbow from his shoulder and strung it, but had not notched an arrow.

When they were half way up the hill a cackle rang from the trees, a laugh that sounded like stones being dragged along a washboard. It was disconcerting and out of place in this area of beauty and nature, and the men grimaced, especially Grum who had obviously heard the sound before. He looked at Draybar and said, in as low a voice as possible, '*Goblins! Pass it on!*'

'Goblins, pass it on!'

'Goblins, pass it on!'

Knowing this, they readied their weapons.

As they ascended the hill the outline of the castle finally began to take shape. The trees had crowded about it, as if protecting it from the outside world, and the vines and weeds had covered the walls. It was a simple affair; there were four walls with a tower at each corner and a keep rose from within, only slightly higher than the protecting walls. As the elf Eyanur and his brother Eyon had said, it wasn't a large place and the keep didn't reach higher than the tallest trees that surrounded it. The sun filtering through the canopy created a patchwork of light and shadow that covered the grey, bleak walls.

They were approaching it from the front and the great gate was closed, but it hardly mattered as to the right of the gate the wall had collapsed outwards, probably from neglect and wear. It wasn't a recent collapse as moss, vines and greenery had covered the mound. It appeared easy to traverse and one by one the men gathered on the outside of it.

The trail of smoke was winding its way into the air from just beyond this collapse but none of them could see the fire or if anything attended it. They all kept low and quiet as they came together.

By "Dusty"

'The fire in the courtyard will be a sentry,' the dwarf Grum said, obviously knowledgeable of these creatures. 'Probably one or two, depending on the size of the raiding party.'

'How do you know it's just a raiding party?' Tere enquired, his human eyes narrowed.

The great gate was closed, but it hardly mattered as to the right of the gate the wall had collapsed outwards

'Because if it was a warband this keep would be swarming with them and there'd be a lot more fires. Now, I'm thinking seven to ten of them, probably someone big in charge, so we take the sentries fast and quiet.'

Draybar, a human lady of barely twenty summers, hefted her crossbow. 'Shall we shoot them?'

Grum nodded. 'Indeed. You, Tere and Cuthred can move up…'

'Wait,' Cuthred, another man, hissed. 'You're not in charge.'

'Grum has dealt with goblins before, we'd be wise to listen,' Tere suggested.

'I agree,' Eyanur said. 'Grum?'

Grum briefly looked at Cuthred's grimace of displeasure, smiled and continued. 'If we take the sentries as fast as we can then get

By Boris Samec

to the keep and get inside, take them by surprise. Goblins are easy one on one but when they're in a group they can be vicious, they'll try to swarm over you. If they do come out then spread out, try to keep them apart, don't let them group up too much. It'll be easier.'

Goblins are easy one on one but when they're in a group they can be vicious, they'll try to swarm over you

'Sounds like you have had a lot of experience,' Tere said to Grum as he readied his bow and took position with Cuthred and Draybar. Eyanur and Eyon waited just behind them, ready to follow them up and over the rubble after they had fired on the goblins.

'The War to the North lasted eight years. I fought in the army but I also travelled with scouts and skirmish parties trying to root goblins out on our flanks who were giving us trouble. Yes, I learned a lot.'

Tere nodded and was about to say something else when Cuthred snarled, 'Are you ready?'

'I am.'

'Okay. I'll count to three. One.'

They all took deep breaths and focused on the fight that would no doubt occur in the next few moments.

'Two.'

They pulled back on their bows. The wood creaked softly. Draybar licked her lips in anticipation.

'*Three.*'

As one they rose from the rubble to see two goblins stood at the campfire. They were green-skinned and hunched over, with bowed legs and long arms. Their armour was what they could scavenge from their victims, patches of chainmail, leather and even plate. Their weapons were notched and serrated

axes and one of them had short throwing spears in a quiver over his shoulder. They were mumbling to each other, watching the sparks of the fire flicker and the smoke curl upwards.

Around this fire were nine goblins, all eating fresh uncooked meat and drinking filthy water

With a thud two arrows lodged into the first goblin's chest, whilst Draybar's crossbow bolt took the second one in the throat. Without a scream of pain or a cry of warning the two creatures fell to the ground, dead.

As quickly as they could the companions hurried down the other side of the collapsed wall and into the courtyard. It was strewn with debris and filth, the wood of buildings that would have been propped up on the inside of the walls obviously used to shore up the other walls or used as firewood. Like the outside it was overgrown and young trees sprang up here and there.

Directly across from them were the open main doors of the keep and they could see the light from another fire flickering inside. They ran quickly and quietly across and ran up the steps, weapons at the ready. When they reached the door they all came to a sudden, sliding halt.

Inside, the hall was empty apart from several rotting wooden benches piled up against the far wall behind the raised place where the master of the castle's seat would have been. In the centre of the hall was a small fire, and around this fire were nine goblins, all eating fresh uncooked meat and drinking filthy water.

But it was not the goblins the companions were staring at. On the opposite side of the fire was a huge figure, a creature so bulky in its armour that it must have easily towered ten feet. The armour was beaten metal, like someone had simply taken sheets of iron and nailed them onto the monster. The helmet was covered in horns, the shield that it now took up had a wicked spike protruding from the centre and the huge curved serrated sword it slowly raised in one hand

By Darren Lysenko

would have been a two-handed weapon in the hands of a normal man. It stood to its full height, the firelight making it glow as if possessed, and it crashed through the fire, scattering burning wood and embers everywhere.

Grum took a step back, his hard face now twisted in shock and horror.

'*Giant!*' he roared, and ran back down the steps.

The men scrambled down the stairs. Tere and Cuthred both shot at the giant as it crashed through the hall, swatting goblins out of it's way in its efforts to get to them, but one arrow simply bounced off the armour and the other penetrated the metal but appeared to do very little.

They all headed back to the collapsed wall but Eyon slowed. 'What do we do?' he cried. 'We run!' Grum shouted as he started to ascend the rubble.

'But we have to clear this place…' Eyanur began, but he was cut off by a mighty bellow of rage.

The giant stood at the top of the steps, the table-sized shield and sword raised into the air as it roared its fury. Eyanur and Eyon looked at the retreating men, then at each other.

Then the elves readied their weapons and faced the giant as it stamped down the steps.

Tere watched the brothers stand shoulder to

By Boris Samec

shoulder, one with sword raised the other with spear levelled, and he gritted his teeth.

It stood to its full height, the firelight making it glow as if possessed, and it crashed through the fire

They seemed like children with toys in front of this huge black-armoured creature. Without truly thinking about what he was doing he dropped his bow, unsheathed his sword and unslung his shield from his back.

As he took position by the side of the brothers he heard Grum behind them crying

out, '*You fools! What are you doing? Run! Run!*'

But Tere didn't hear what he shouted after that. The giant was upon them.

With a huge, ear-shattering cry it bought the sword down in a huge overhead arc. They all dived out of the way and it buried itself easily a foot deep into the hard ground, but the giant pulled it free with little effort. It then took a sideswipe at Tere first who was forced to dive to the floor to avoid it, and when the brothers stabbed at the creature with little effect it turned on them, batting Eyanur back and through the air with it's shield and thrusting at Eyon with the sword.

Eyanur crashed into the piled rotting wood stacked by the wall and it smashed and splintered. He cried out in pain and rolled to the ground. The giant ignored him and concentrated on Eyon who ducked and dived out of the way of the wildly swinging sword, which enraged the giant more and more.

The goblins finally appeared at the top of the steps...
The first one found an arrow in his chest the second was shot through the eye by a bolt.

It was then the goblins finally appeared at the top of the steps and, emboldened by the giant's actions, came screaming down to aid.

The first one found an arrow in his chest the second was shot through the eye by a bolt.

By "Maccwar"

By Michael DeFranco

The others faltered and slowed as Cuthred and Draybar reloaded their weapons, and

‘We fought thousands of these monsters in the War to the North,’
‘Why do you think it went on for eight years?’

Grum came sailing through the air with his axe chopping wildly. He felled another two goblins before they realised what was happening.

‘Get up, you idiot!’ Grum was shouting. ‘Get up and run!’

‘The brothers!’ Tere shouted back, and gathered his wits enough to skewer another goblin running at him.

‘They’re dead!’ Grum cried as he downed another one. An arrow punctured another. ‘The giant will kill them!’

Tere traded blows with one of the last two goblins whilst Grum faced off with the other. Tere glanced over to the giant as he fought and saw Eyon leading the monster away from his brother, jabbing the creature with his spear and shouting taunts. Eyanur was slowly getting to his feet.

He finally hacked the creature to the ground as Grum finished his and turned to help the brothers, but Grum grabbed him by the arm. ‘Don’t! You’ll lose!’

‘We have to try!’

‘We fought thousands of these monsters in the War to the North,’ Grum growled. ‘Why do you think it went on for eight years? We have to run!’

Tere tore himself away. ‘Then run!’ he shouted angrily, directly in Grum’s face, and jumped over the bodies of the fallen goblins to get to the giant.

He dropped his shield and grabbed his sword in both hands and with a wild cry he leaped through the air and onto the back of the towering foe. Where the armour was tied together there was a narrow gap and the sword point slipped between it and into the giant.

There was a gush of black blood from the pale-green monster and it’s bellows of fury

turned suddenly into screams of pain. It staggered forward then backward, and it tried to reach around to swat Tere off, dropping the huge sword and shield. When it realised it couldn't reach far enough behind it started to thrash wildly but Tere hung on, wrapping his legs around it and hanging onto the sword hilt with all his strength. An arrow bounced off its armour as Cuthred tried another shot, but a crossbow bolt from Draybar slammed through the armour and buried itself deep. The giant roared again.

Knowing that the creature was intent on ridding itself of the man on his back Eyon and Eyanur stepped in. They jammed their weapons in the gaps of the giant's armour now that they could get clear strikes, and before long there was black ichor pouring from a dozen wounds. As the giant grew weaker they stood back and it sank to its knees, then fell to its face. With a wheeze it exhaled it's last breath as Eyanur despatched it with a thrust to the neck.

Slowly Tere stood, black blood covering his armour and face, his sword dripping with it, his long hair matted and filthy. He stared at Grum and then the others, and any traces of the friendly, smiling man they had come to know on their brief journey was gone to be replaced by a glaring, almost maniacal stranger.

'*I do not run,*' he hissed.▪

By "puggimer"

KINGS OF WAR ROLEPLAYING GAME PLAYTEST

By
JONATHAN HICKS

By Darren Lysenko

Kings of War (KoW) is making a huge impact on the gaming community as a wonderfully simple system with a solid tactical feel to it. The easy-to-learn system, the pseudo-historical atmosphere and the instantly recognisable elements of the setting make it easily accessible.

In these pages you will find a set of additional rules for playing a fantasy roleplaying game in the Kings of War setting. This game uses the KoW system, the simple and easy wargame rules, and has been designed for quick and effective use in a roleplaying game to invoke a sense of adventure and cinematic action.

This is the playtest version of the game. The rules have been tested and are hopefully capable of coping with most situations that arise during a roleplaying game, but as is the case with all RPGs nothing is predictable.

PLAYTESTERS WANTED!

It is hoped that this playtest version will enable the Gamemaster (GM) to run smooth games, but if anything crops up, anything is missing or you feel that something needs adding, removing or embellishing, then send your thoughts and ideas to **farsightgames@yahoo.co.uk** with the subject header 'KOWRPG Playtest' followed by the date. With your help the game may be able to transform into a system everyone can enjoy – an RPG that gamers helped to create. The main aim is to keep the RPG simple and not overburden it with rules, tables and options.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THIS GAME

All you need to play this game is a copy of the Kings of War hardback rulebook, photocopies of the simple character sheet, some spare paper, some pencils and some six-sided dice. You might also want to represent your characters on the tabletop with miniatures or models as the system still uses the KoW rules system to resolve conflict.

The Kings of War roleplaying game has been

designed so that any characters created can be used as individual Heroes in the Kings of War wargame. The skill list added will obviously have no impact on the wargame but will be useful for the roleplaying game. Although the Heroes can be used in the wargame it's advised that you check with your opponent if it's okay to field them so as to not unbalance the game too much.

RULES

STATISTICS

These are the starting scores of all Heroes, as per the Kings of War rules. They are also the scores of an average non-combatant civilian.

Sp 5
Me 6+
Ra 6+
De 1+
At 1
Ne 10/12

HERO BUILD POINTS

A player is given 100 points to spend on their Hero, known as Hero Build Points. They can change the scores of the statline and add levels in special rules and skills. The basic breakdown is as below:

10 to increase Sp by 1 point (maximum +2 points permanent)
10 to reduce Me and Ra by 1 point (lowest score 3 permanent)
10 to increase At by 1 point (maximum 2 points initial)
10 per extra point in a single skill (maximum 2 points per skill initial)
10 per 1 point in a special rule spell if the hero is a wizard (Breath Attack, Fly, Heal, Regeneration, Zap! – maximum 3 points initial)
10 per extra point in Ne (so 10/12 would go to 11/13 – maximum double original scores permanent)

Where the description in parentheses uses the terms *'initial'* and *'permanent'* indicates the maximum score that can be reached either during initial character creation or for all time. *'Initial'* means that you cannot go above this score during character creation but as your character grows and becomes more experienced they can add more points at a later date. *'Permanent'* indicates that once the Hero has reached this score they

By "Dusty"

By "imm0rtal reaper"

cannot go any further for the rest of their playing time.

Magic items- you can spend Hero Build Points on a single magical artefact as detailed in the in rulebook, the point cost is the same as the point cost of the artefact. Benefits are cumulative with any special rules via race.

To increase De, a Hero must buy armour (see 'Equipment' later on).

RACE AND SPECIAL RULES

Your choice of your Hero's race and where they are from automatically gains the character a single *Special Rule* and 1 extra point in the relevant skill:

Elvenholme Elf – *Elite,* Agility
Twilight Glade Elf – *Elite,* Lore
Brokenwall Islands Elf – *Elite,* Water Craft
Sylvan Elf – *Elite,* Perception
Free Dwarf – *Headstrong*, Strength
Imperial Dwarf – *Headstrong*, Artisan
Ogre – *Crushing Strength 1*, Strength
Human: The Mammoth Steppe – *Vicious*, Ride
Human: Primovantor – *Inspiring*, Hide/Sneak
Human: Successor Kingdoms – *Inspiring*, Charisma
Human: Hegemony of Basilea – *Inspiring*, Lore
Human: Young Kingdoms – *Inspiring*, Artisan

SKILLS

Skills make a Hero unique. What they are capable of outside of the wars that swarm across Mantica can make all the difference to their future, and life is not all about swinging swords or commanding armies.

All the skills listed below automatically have a score of 1 in them.

Agility

The character can leap greater distances, climb walls, and otherwise do things an average person can't. Dramatic leaps of raised drawbridges, jumping to grab the runaway carriage, scaling the castle walls... this skill covers all those situations where you have to spring into action. The maximum distance covered in yards by a leap is the character's Sp stat.

Artisan

The character can mend and make weapons, repair wagons and shoe horses, fletch and repair armour, metalwork and carpentry. Choose one area of expertise to be skilled in.

Charisma

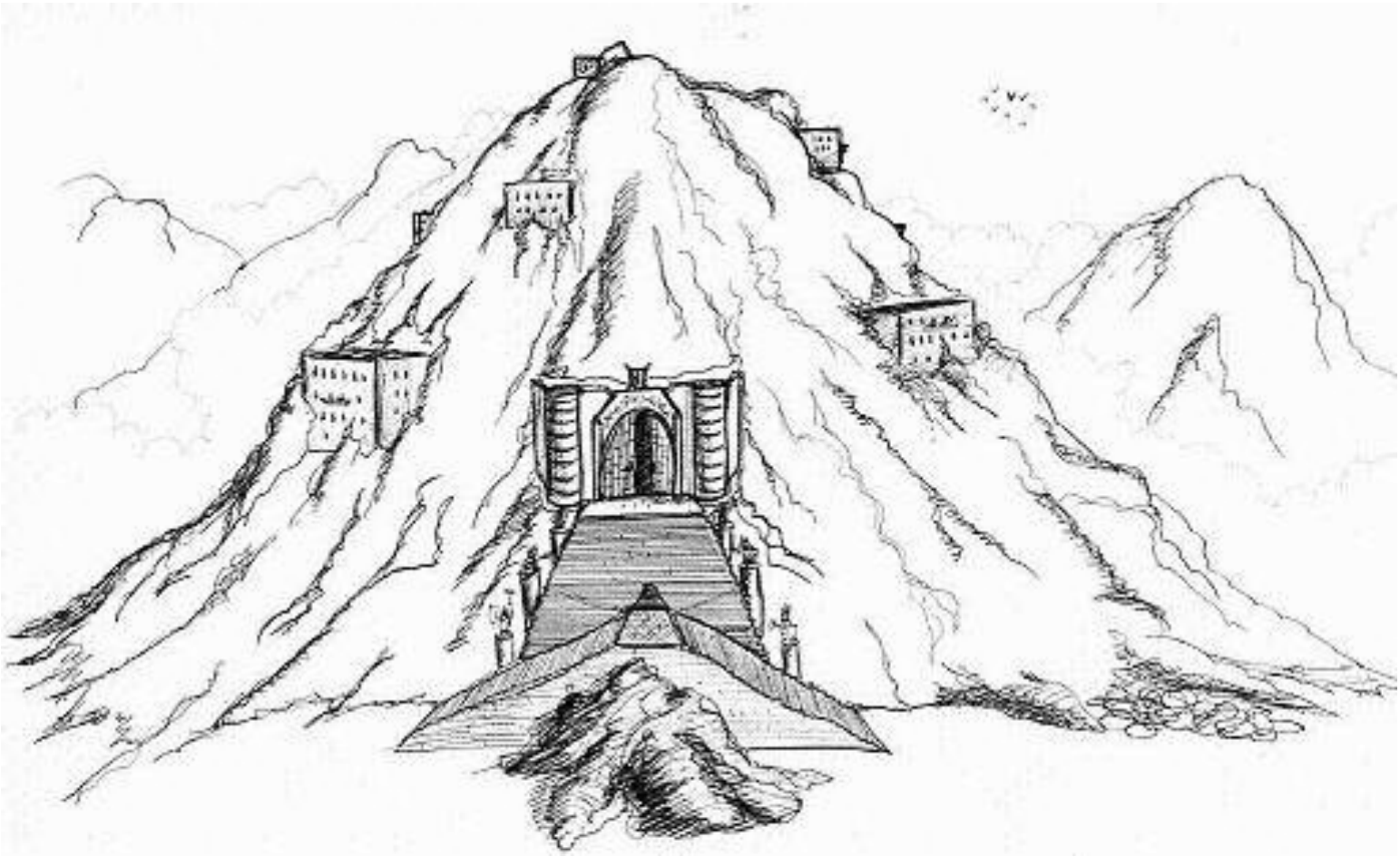
The ability to convince others to do what you want. Handling an interpersonal situation can be a tricky business. If it is a meeting of powerful people, a hostage situation, gambling, bargaining for a better price, a very delicate personal matter or any other situation where the PC's actions and words must make an impression on the target audience, this skill is necessary. All high-ranking persons such as nobles have this skill, because negotiation and the ability to talk your way through something is a must.

Hide/Sneak

The ability to move and hide without being seen or heard. Sometimes, discretion is called for and the PC may find it useful to be able to tuck themselves away to avoid any unwanted attention. This Skill is handy for not getting involved in any situation that could prove disastrous.

Locks and Traps

The character can pick locks and find/set traps. Many doors in the realm are locked to the outsider and those of lesser repute will



By Jonathan Hicks

want in to find out what the locked door was protecting.

Lore

This score is the characters knowledge of the world around them, and generally covers their mental capability.

By "imm0rtal reaper"

Medicine

The ability to treat wounds and ailments outside of combat. A successful roll restores a Hero near death to Wavering level. Cannot be used whilst characters are in combat.

Perception

This is a measure of a character's awareness and is rolled against to see if things are noticed, found or otherwise realised. It's a handy little tool so that the GM can point the players in the right direction.

Ride

This skill covers the ability to ride horse or mule, or maybe something a little more exotic.

Strength

The world can be dangerous at times, and the overall fitness of a character will determine how physically able the PC is, and how she will withstand the rigours and pressure put upon the body during these trials. Use this for lifting items, contests of strength and surviving deadly situations.

Water Craft

The ability to swim and pilot boats. Not everyone can swim or sail and this is reflected with this skill. Staying afloat in water takes practice, and if you don't get that practice, you could fall foul of some very wet situations.

THE SKILL ROLL

A Skill Roll determines if a Hero manages to succeed in the required area of expertise. To make a Skill roll, roll a number of D6 equal to the score in the relevant skill; at least one of the dice rolled has to score 4+. If a single die comes up 4+, then the Hero has succeeded in their skill roll.

To reflect easy or difficult tasks the Gamemaster can adjust the number of dice rolled down or up – down for harder tasks, up for easier tasks. See below for a guideline for difficulty adjustments:

+2 dice if the task is Very Easy

+1 die for Easy
If the task is of an Average difficulty, then roll the dice as normal
-1 die if the task is Hard
-2 for dice for Very Hard

If any adjustments reduce the number of dice to be rolled to zero then it is an automatic failure.

Opposed skill rolls occur when two characters, be it Hero against Hero or Hero against NPC, test their skills against one another. Say they are arm wrestling; they would both roll their *Strength* skill. Say the Hero is looking to get a better price from a trader; they would both roll their *Charisma* skill.

For opposed skill rolls, roll 1D6 and add the relevant skill level. The highest score wins. Re-roll ties.

COMBAT

All combat is conducted as per the Kings of War combat rules, with a few variations for combat in the roleplaying game, what we will call 'single combat'. Note that the additional rules for single combat only apply to the roleplaying game and not the wargame, unless the players agree to utilise them in some way.

First of all, rolling 1D6 and adding the character's Agility skill score decides initiative. The highest goes first, the second highest, next, the third highest next and so no. Any ties are re-rolled for the initiative position they are tied for.

Secondly, if the Hero is fighting multiple opponents then they can split up their At score to attack each one. So, for example, let's say that your Hero has an At score of 2 and she's fighting two goblins – she can roll one die for each goblin, making a separate attack roll for each one. Let's say she's in the same predicament but has an At score of 3. – she could roll 1 die attacking one goblin and 2 dice attacking the other, again the attack rolls are separate. Heroes cannot attack more than 3 targets this way.

Thirdly, the Damage rules are also different. Roll a NERVE test as normal but the effects of damage varies –

By Michael DeFranco

By Pete Kijek

STEADY – The Hero has been hit but is still fighting
WAVERING – The Hero has been struck badly, and must minus 1 die from all future rolls. This effect is cumulative.
ROUT! – The Hero has been defeated. They must roll another 2D6 and add their STRENGTH skill, if they have it. 8+ means they have survived but are unconscious, lower than that means they have been killed.

Note that these results are only for the RPG – if the Hero is in the wargame then normal Nerve results apply.

EXPERIENCE

Experience is accumulated as the Hero adventures and completes quests. After every successful adventure, the Hero gets 1 experience point that can be used to improve the Hero. This is how it works:

When the Hero is initially created, they're worth 100 Hero Build Points and these are spent to generate the Hero's initial stats. Every time they gain an experience point it can be spent on new abilities.

So, a Hero needs 1 experience point to be able to spend and earn a new special rule, increase special rule by 1 point, increase a skill by 1 point, reduce their Me or Ra scores by 1 point (minimum 3), or increase At or Ne by 1 point. For every point the Hero wants to improve a stat or skill by, they must spend a number of Experience points equal to that skill or stat's current score.

For example, let's say a Hero has a Charisma skill level of 1. To increase this skill by another 1 point he will have to spend 1 experience point. Now that the skill score is at 2, to increase it to 3 he would have to spend 2 more Experience points. The same goes for Stats; for example, if they have an At score of 2, then they will have to spend 2 Experience points to increase it to 3. Alternatively, if they have a Me score of 5, they will have to spend 5 points to bring it down to 4, then another 4 points to bring it down to 3. If they have a special rule or spell such as *Crushing Strength (2)*, they will have to spend 2 Experience points to increase it to *Crushing Strength (3)*. Ne is increased by spending 3 points at a time to increase it by 1 point.

EQUIPMENT

All characters start with 50 coins to spend on

equipment. Any points left over from initial character creation *only* can be spent on extra coins, 1 point per five extra coins.

Weapons and Armour

1-handed weapon	10
2-handed weapon - +1 dmg, cannot be used with shield	15
Bow/crossbow	10
5 arrows	1
Shield – +1 to De	5
Leather Armour – +1 to De	10
Chain Armour - +2 to De	20
Plate Armour – +3 to De	30

Gear

Bedroll	1
Blanket	1
Cooking Pot/Pan	2
Fishing Rod	1
Pegs	1 per 5 pegs
Tent	3 per person
Tinder box	2
Travelling Rations	1 per day's worth

Food and Board

Basic Meal	1
Good Meal	2
Hearty Meal	3
Bed for the Night	2
Room for the Night	3 per person
Suite for the Night	5 per person

Travel

Coach	1 per 10 leagues
Boat	1 per 20 leagues
Horse	10

Be sure to see the Appendix for printable character sheets for use with this RPG!

AN INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE

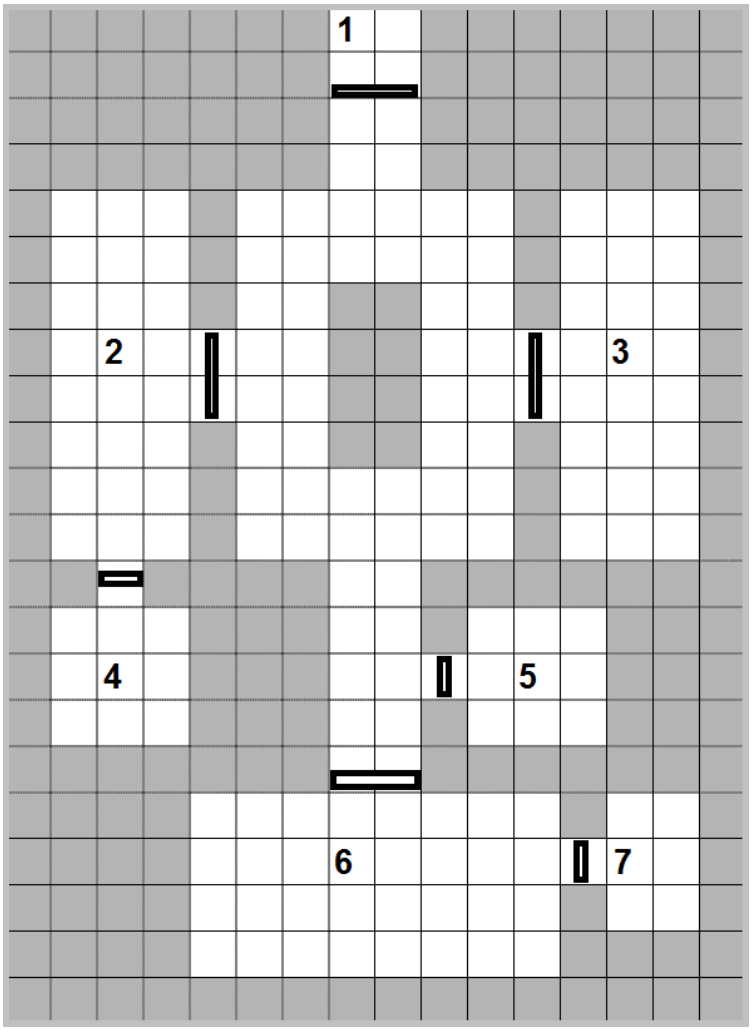
By Boris Samec

THE GHOST KING'S BARROW

IF YOU INTEND TO BE A PLAYER IN THIS GAME, PLEASE STOP READING NOW!

This is an adventure for beginning Heroes. Perhaps they are warriors in search of adventure and fame before they throw themselves into the field of battle. Perhaps they are established Heroes who already fight in the wars and wish to find artefacts that will improve the force they fight for.

The Ghost King's Barrow is a high hill in the forest of Galahir, far away from any towns or cities. It is supposed to contain the *Edge of Guntrun*, a sword so keen that it is rumoured to be able to cut through any armour. The hill rises from the forest like a malignant sore – no tree lives upon it's crown and those that



By "left64"

By Michael DeFranco

surround the base of the mound are rotten and twisted. A sense of malevolence permeates the place and is so tangible it tastes like ash in the air.

The Heroes approach the Barrow from the North – begin the adventure at number '1'.

1 – ENTRANCE: The door to the Ghost King's Barrow is huge and ornate, the arch is carved stone that depicts dragons and fighting warriors, worn and eroded by the elements. There's a lot of growth that blocks the entrance, but the great stone doors have collapsed, attacked by either time or grave robbers.

The corridor beyond is flagstone and brick, and dead roots from long-gone trees have pushed the walls in over time so some of the corridor is collapsed. It's freezing cold and there's a stench of rotten vegetables and sulphur.

The doorway leads to a junction where the Heroes can go left or right. As you can see from the map, the corridor goes around in a square.

There are rats here – not your normal rats, but huge rats the size of large dogs, covered in sores and filth. And they do not like being disturbed. For this initial encounter, make the number of Giant Rats equal to the number of Heroes.

GIANT RAT: Sp 6, Me 6, Ra n/a, De 2, At 1, Ne 6/8

2 – TOMB 1: The stone door to the tomb is locked, so a successful *Locks and Traps* skill roll is required to get through.

Inside the tomb is a great sarcophagus, and inscribed on the top of it are four squares. In the first three squares are scratched the letters 'F', 'E' and 'A', and the last square is empty. Written below the square are the words '*too much of this will kill you*'.

Nothing the Heroes do will open the sarcophagus, they must scratch a letter into the last square. The answer to the riddle is 'W', as in 'Water' (the first three letters are the beginning of the four elements; Fire, Earth and Air).

If they scratch any other letter into the square then the door on the south wall opens and they are attacked by a Skeletal Champion who protects the Tomb. The Champion will also attack if they open the door to room 4.

SKELETAL CHAMPION: Sp 6, Me 4, Ra n/a, De 4, At 2, Ne 11/13

Inside the sarcophagus is the corpse of Prince Tarun the Riddler, and on the corpse is a perfectly preserved suit of chainmail and 6D6 coins.

3 – TOMB 2: The stone door to the tomb is smashed in and upon looking inside the Heroes see dozens of corpses in various states of decomposition piled in the room, all around a sarcophagus in the very centre, all reaching for the item on top of the sarcophagus, a golden crown that shines with an inner light.

If the Heroes check the room before entering then they'll see gargoyle heads lining the top of each wall, and on a successful hard *Perception* skill roll they will see that each have a small hole in the mouth; anyone entering the room will be shot at by a dart – Ra 4, At 4. The trap mechanism can be located and disarmed with a successful hard *Locks and Traps* skill roll. Failing that, they

By "Osbad"

By Boris Samec

will have to move slowly to get the crown – two successful *Agility* skill rolls, one to get to the crown, one to get back to the door.

The crown is worthless brass. Sorry.

4 – The room of the Skeletal Champion in room 2. If searched, a successful *Perception* skill roll uncovers 2D6 coins.

5 – TREASURE ROOM: This room has already been looted, and all that remains under the rubble is 2D6 coins.

6 – THE GHOST KING'S CHAMBER: In here, on his throne on the south wall, sits the Ghost King. He is nothing but a skeleton dressed in once-splendid robes, and rings and bracelets adorn his arms (worth 20 coins). He has a great iron key around his neck – this key is the only thing that will open the huge iron door to room 7. He appears completely dead and is no threat, but his undead guardians attack anyone entering the room

2 SKELETONS: Sp 5, Me 5, Ra n/a, De 4, At 1, Ne -/13
2 GHOULS: Sp 6, Me 4, Ra n/a, De 3, At 1, Ne 9/11

7 – THE GHOST KING'S VAULT: Inside the vault on a pedestal sits the Edge of Guntrun, a magical artefact equal to a Blade of Slashing.

Unfortunately, anyone removing this blade awakens the Ghost King, who is none too pleased that his sword has been disturbed.

GHOST KING: Sp 5, Me 4+, Ra n/a, De 5+, At 5, Ne 14/16, Special: *Crushing Strength (1), Dark Surge (6), Individual, Inspiring*

As the King is incredibly slow after being still for so long, the Heroes are quite welcome to flee the barrow now that they have their prize. Of course, the Ghost King will want his sword back, and he will hunt them down to reclaim what is his. But that's a future adventure…

All Heroes completing this adventure get 1 experience point each.▪

Tân-y-loar

By Matt Gilbert

Part II

I DON'T KNOW how long I ploughed into the trees: time was meaningless. I was blind to my surroundings and unconscious of where I was heading. My focus was reduced to a tunnel – a path of destruction ahead of me and the goading, sneering hand of revenge, both pushing me on and beckoning me forwards at once. My emotions churned within me just as my horse's hooves churned the soil beneath us. Sadness, guilt, hate and rage boiled through my veins and clouded my thoughts leading me deep into the forest and hopelessly lost.

It was getting difficult to see. The gloom was oppressive here. The shadows of the canopy seemed to merge and solidify, becoming a perceptible shroud that was relentlessly pushing down from above, the pressure squeezing the light and warmth from around me. Here, there were noises but they seemed as alien as the surroundings as they echoed through the twisting, interwoven branches. The cries of solitary birds reverberated mournfully through the canopy. The ground was damp underfoot and in the distance to either side I could make out a faint eerie glow from between the trees. Cursing my youthful recklessness I tried to turn to find my way back, giving up the chase now and knowing myself for a fool. I had left my father and the others just when they needed me.

By "imm0rtal reaper"

By "Maccwar"

To my increasing despair, the trail I had created had seemingly vanished. Either I had taken a wrong direction or the forest had regrown by some trickery I was unaware of. The darkness and cold of the forest began to seep inside me, both into my bones and into my mind. To my right was a glow again, dimly radiating through the trees. A cool white light that seemed to somehow spread a little warmth as it washed across the forest floor. With nowhere else to go, the temptation of the radiance proved too great. If I was lost here for the night, surely some light for a camp would be a good idea? I could find my way again in the morning.

As I approached the source of the light I could hear the dripping of water and could feel the dampness in the air. I slowed, now on foot and leading my horse which was becoming nervous and jittery. Trying to sooth the frightened animal my skin too began to tingle as the trees opened out to reveal a shimmering pool of white, milky water. As we entered the clearing, tendrils of mist that had snaked across the pool seemed to retract at our presence and evaporate or curl away amongst the roots which trailed into the water. Out the corner of my eye but never there when I turned my head, I saw eyes, lights and things I cannot describe. Just there, on the edge of reason.

I saw eyes, lights and things I cannot describe. Just there, on the edge of reason

I didn't notice her at first but once I had, I don't know how I missed her. Sitting across from me, in the roots of a huge, ancient gnarled tree, sat a child. She was small and seemingly very young. Her pale green skin was smooth and delicate. Her clothing helped her blend into the woodland around her. What struck me most about her though was her cascade of hair – pure white it was and it seemed to have an inner sheen which fed from the light of the pool. I tied up my horse and moved cautiously round the edge of the water. She had not noticed me, so engrossed as she was in her play. She was studying what I took to be a doll of some kind, a beautiful slender thing. She began to hum as she turned it over in her hands and then began to use what appeared to be a crystalline tool to gently carve more detail into the figure. I sat

down, entranced, not ten feet from where she worked. I had not eaten since breakfast and now tired and weary, my stomach betrayed my hunger.

The girl's head snapped round at the sound. I scrambled backwards until my back hit a tree. Rather than look startled, the young elf girl, for that's what I thought she was, looked curious. She cocked her head to one side and gazed at me with wide, yellow, feline eyes. I stared back and felt the black pupils pulling me in. I was helpless but not afraid. The tug was gentle and all my worries, guilt and fear began to ebb away. I felt the girl understood me more than I did myself. As I thought of my father a darkness started to pull me away, a small sob bubbling up as I battled with emotion. The girl smiled and moved to take my hand and the moment passed.

She stood and with a motion from a frail looking hand, indicated I should follow. Without hesitation, I rose and went to collect my horse so trusting I was of this strange being. She waited patiently, unafraid of the animal that was still visibly nervous and many times her size. She cocked her head again – the same gesture as before and

She cocked her head to one side and gazed at me with wide, yellow, feline eyes

held the horse's gaze. It calmed, relaxing with a snort and began nibbling the leaves of a nearby bush. Taking my hand once more the girl led us through the trees, her footsteps silent and graceful where ours were loud and clumsy in comparison. Somehow she move effortlessly through along a path I had not seen before, whereas I kept snagging myself on thorns and had to swipe trailing branches to clear my passage. She turned back, smiled, and we continued.

We progressed for perhaps an hour like this, all the while the forest around growing darker as night fell. I was struggling and the elf girl must have realized for she whispered something into the air – the first sound I had heard her make. Her voice was hard to describe; like bells tinkling in the breeze but also with an earthy, gravelly undertone, all on the edge of hearing. She cupped her hands and from all around us, tiny points of light like miniature floating suns, in a multitude of pastel colors, lazily drifted from the

By Michael DeFranco

By "Nathan"

air and found their way into her palms where they merged into a beautiful orb of pale golden light. With another breathy command, the orb rose to float above us and when we moved on, it followed, casting its light upon and around us so that my footsteps were more sure and my horse did not risk injury.

I could feel I had stopped breathing and could not move; muscles treacherous from the fear

We stopped for me to rest. The girl must have sensed my weariness and indicated to sit. We had entered another clearing and what little light was left in the sky merged with the glow from our orb to cast spidery shadows all across the scene before me. I closed my eyes and leant back against a stone and that's when I sensed it.

The air had gone cold. The hairs on the back of my neck rose and an icy thrill spread through my veins. The forest had gone silent. Our guide had gone still and rigid, staring across the space into the darkness of the vegetation opposite. I knew what was coming but as the branches parted and the beast emerged from the gloom I could feel I had stopped breathing and could not move; muscles treacherous from the fear. The Abyssal stepped into the clearing, the light from our orb reflecting and running along the edge of the huge rune encrusted axe it held at its side. I was reminded of the summer storms we have out on the plains, where the sky lights up with the dance of lightning as it plays its way through the clouds. Sometime the cloud edges glow silver, pink, purple – as the sky fire explodes behind them and the mortals on the ground quake in fear. The halfbreed was the storm, its hooves the thunder and I could see the sky fire alive in the weapon it carried.

It was the look of fear in the eyes of the girl that ignited the fire within me. That and my horse screaming and bolting from the clearing, crashing wildly through the undergrowth and lost to me for good. Our guide, this kind and gentle creature who had soothed our fears and was taking us to safety now looked frail, small and vulnerable. Anger and memory returned. Anger at what the brute had done to my father and anger at the distress the child was now in. I scrambled to my feet and, grabbing the girl

by the arm pulled her behind me and into a hollow under a huge tree root. As I pulled my sword free the Abyssal raised its axe and roared into the night; the same horrific cry that had paralyzed me before but which now fuelled my anger and infused me with a heady rush of blood. Huge rippling muscles launched the monster across the clearing in two giant strides and our weapons clashed with a screeching metallic ring that bounced around us in barely muffled echoes.

I cried out as the weapon shattered and flew from my useless hand. The monster snarled in triumph and reared up to bury its hooves through my skull

I blocked. I blocked again. It was all I could do to defend myself and the girl from the fury of the beast. As I fell to one knee pushing the child further into the hollow I glanced into the face of our tormentor and stared into the fire of hatred burning in its crimson eyes. I stared into the Abyss that day, and but through force of will to tear my gaze away from the depths of the hell I saw there, would be dead now, my soul trapped in a demonic limbo within those terrible eyes. Of this I am certain.

The axe crashed down and my weakened arm snapped with the blow as I raised my sword to parry. I cried out as the weapon shattered and flew from my useless hand. The monster snarled in triumph and reared up to bury its hooves through my skull. Just as the end was upon me, I saw the shadows move behind it – unfurling themselves from a tree and leaping onto the back of the Abyssal with a resounding leathery snap of wings and a piercing screech. Razor sharp claws dug onto the flanks of my attacker and scaled jaws snapped around its neck, trying to find purchase. The Abyssal reeled backwards, desperately trying to dislodge the bark-wrym, for I now know that's what it was, while avoiding the biting, searching teeth. It slammed itself into a massive trunk attempting to crush the sylvan-drakon with its bulk but the wrym wriggled clear at the last moment and dropped to the ground.

I watched in shock; numb with pain, apprehension and wonder as the two monsters fought in front of me, locked in a whirlwind of snarling, ripping, bloody combat. The bark-wyrm was trying to claw the open wound I had seen before on the

By Darren Lysenko

By "puggimer"

halfbreed but screeched in pain as the huge axe blade bit down savagely into its wing. Just before the Abyssal could follow up there burst from the trees a host of creatures which seemed to boil over the ground and surround the monster. Green skinned elves, surely the kin of the child, leapt through the branches planting arrows with unerring accuracy into the body, the shoulder and face of the fiend. The throng which roiled over it confused my eyes. I saw animals, sprites, fairies and things for which I have no name. So many of them – snapping, tearing and clawing. As my vision faded and a veil of darkness engulfed me, the last thing I saw was the Abyssal disappearing under a rolling blanket of death; the last thing I heard, an horrific scream as a wicked soul was dragged back to the depths of hell.

I saw animals, sprites, fairies and things for which I have no name. So many of them – snapping, tearing and clawing

I AWOKE WITH a start. The girl was gone and I had been propped up in her place in the hollow. My vision was cloudy but I could see a light such as the orb had made and as my sight cleared I started in fright at the being sitting cross-legged before me. So alike the child she was: green skinned although not as pale; slender and alien. Her angular ears were visible through silvery hair and her high cheekbones and complexion suggested

youth but her eyes, the same, yellow, cat-like eyes regarded me with wisdom seemingly beyond her years. My movement had caused me to wince in pain and she cocked her head in a way very reminiscent of the child. I heard her voice yet her lips never moved.

“You are wounded plainsman. You are trespassing and you are lost. You were not invited here and yet here you are.”

I could only stare back. My wits had left me and I knew not what to say. I felt her there, a gentle yet firm presence inside my head.

By Boris Samec

“The beast is dead. The taint erased from the forest. My daughter tells me you fought for her. Protected her. Why?”

“She is just a child” I managed to stammer “she stood no chance against that thing. It killed already today. It kill… “ I caught my breath “It killed my father. I wasn’t going to let it take another life”.

Your rash action has saved you from death. We do not tolerate unannounced guests

“My daughter can take care of herself.” A faint smile touched her lips. “She also shouldn’t talk to strangers”. Rising to her feet she looked down at me where I sat supported by the tree.

“You were brave and foolish and more the latter. However,” I felt a tinge of compassion flow through our connection. “you did what you thought was right and perhaps saved my daughter from harm. Your rash action has saved you from death. We do not tolerate unannounced guests.” She gestured to the clearing behind her. “As you saw for yourself”.

She turned back and knelt down beside me.

“You must return to your kind. We will do this for you. This time”.

She placed her hand on my damaged arm, so light I could hardly tell, but suddenly a

By "Dusty"

warmth began to spread from her finger tips and a wave of drowsiness rippled in its wake, washing through my aching body. Sleep began to take me but I needed to know.

"Please, "I slurred, "what is her name. Your daughter's name?"

The Fey regarded me quizzically, those deep, golden eyes holding mine as I fought to stay awake.

"Your crude language cannot express her true name." She looked thoughtful. "And I would not tell you even if it could. However, her friends call her Tân-y-loar". She looked up at the sky and then back down at me. "Moonbeam.

Sleep wrapped me in warm, muffling, comforting slumber.

WHEN I CAME to, it was dawn. I was lying on the ground next to a wagon wheel, wrapped in a blanket. I raised my head slowly and watched my breath blow cloudy patterns in the cold morning air. Gingerly, I tried to more my arm. But for a dull ache, nothing more than you would get from sleeping on it, there was no sign of injury and no pain. Had I been dreaming? It had all seemed so real. I rose from my bed and was adjusting to my surroundings when I heard a cry of surprise.

"Eran! Is that really you? We thought you lost boy. Gods be praised you are alive. Your father has been beside himself".

Had I been dreaming? It had all seemed so real

"My father? He's not dead?"

"No lad" Tolk put his hand on my shoulder. "Cuts and bruises, but it'll take more than a beast like that to kill that man, the stubborn ox that he is. Don't tell him I said that mind." He winked at me then pulled himself up to his full height.

"You acted foolishly and abandoned the caravan. Your father is not happy. You will be punished for this and your judgment called into question." He indicated a wagon further down the line. "He tried to persuade the Master to wait until this morning, hoping you would return. Luckily for you, our elf guide was too injured to move us out so has been taking the time to gather his strength. He must have communicated with his like somehow. Two more of 'em turned up last

night and we move out this morning. Gather your things and get ready to go. It'll be hard for your father when he sees you. You have shamed the Trakken" His face softened. "But he will be glad to see you nonetheless."

I felt shamed, stupid and alone. Would people really believe what had happened if I told them anyway? I wasn't sure what I believed myself at that moment either. Everything seemed so surreal. Dreading the day ahead and the journey back to the village to come, I stooped to pick up the blanket I had woken in. As I gathered it into my arms something slipped out and landed with a wet thump on the ground at my feet. In the dawn gloom I couldn't see what it was but as my groping fingers located it and drew it to my face my heart skipped a beat. In my hand I held a beautifully elegant, expertly carved length of wood, the likeness of a Fey looking back at me from what I had previously taken to be a child's toy.

"ARE YOU STILL in here? She fell asleep long ago you know and the fire has gone out."

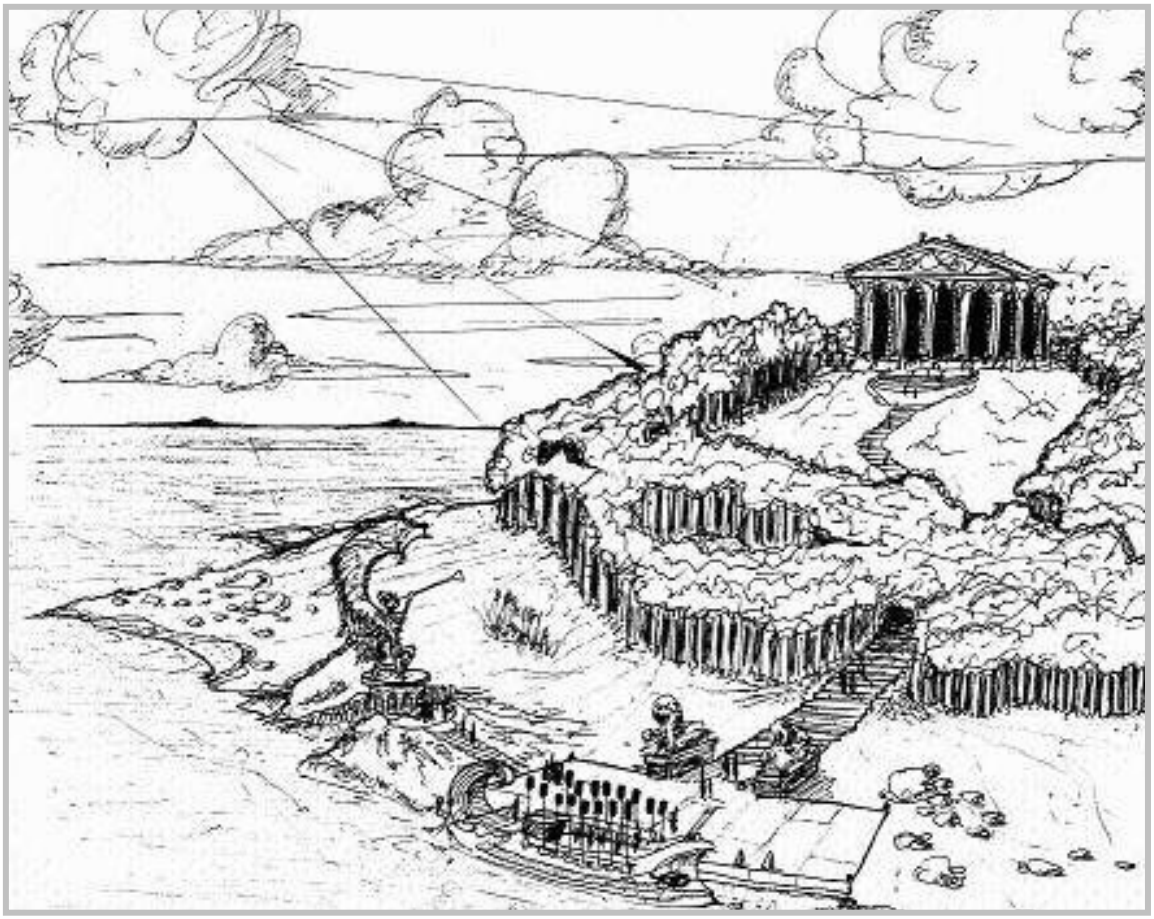
"Yes but the story had to be told. I'd like her to know."

"I think she fell asleep before she found out."

"Ah well. It is a good story. It is worth telling again one day."

"Come now Ur-pa. You'll fall asleep yourself. Kiss her goodnight and then leave her be. I'm going to pour us a drink."

The old man gazes down at his grand-



By Jonathan Hicks

Sage advice and random musings

Hobby chatter from a hairy old gamer.

By "Osbad"

Greetings all!
This month I have chosen to talk about "The Gamer's Pledge".

"What's that?" I hear some of you ask? Well to some of us it's the vow….well, intention of sorts, to paint MORE miniatures than we buy. To some of you reading this you might think that's an easy thing to do; Indeed, I know a few people who plan their purchases, paint them diligently, add them to their collection or army, then go off and plan their next item to buy. Meanwhile, the rest of us seem to buy stuff willy-nilly as the whim takes us, or it finds us weak and unable to resist the mega bargain buy only to get the new shiny metal (or plastic) toy soldiers home and add them to the lead or plastic mountain of other "stuff for my next army" or "next projects pile" or even stuff "I'll eBay and make a killing on".

I have to say I am VERY guilty of this, I dread to think how much I have spent over the years on miniatures that haven't seen the light of day let alone a games table. Over the last two years I have made concerted efforts to redress this balance, taking up the "Gamer's Pledge……erm …Intention" to buy less than I paint. And at the start of the year I was looking good on that promise…'intention,' for the first time probably ever, and definitely the first time since my sixteenth birthday.

Then we had the Kings of War Kickstarter. Oh dear. A big pledge later and my first part of the shipment arrived adding an abyssal dwarf army to my pile of, admittedly already big pile of abyssal dwarves. A few months later and another pledge down and my Dreadball package has arrived with MORE stuff to paint. This has blown any hope of painting more than I have bought well out of the water for this year, and next year isn't looking too good as by then I'll be on the receiving end of the second shipments of both Dreadball and Kings of War (Mmmmmm , golems).

By "puggimer"

So why bother? Well it's the principal of the thing really, I need to at least try to get some of this stuff painted in order to play with it (should that be game with it?) and that's where the "other" version of the gamers pledge comes into play, well for me anyway. There is an excellent post over on http://warhammerforadults.blogspot.com/p/why-is-it-called-warhammer-for-adults.html I really advise you to go read it and the rest of the blog too, as it's the sort of thing I enjoyed when I was a lad and one of the reasons that I got into gaming. And although it pertains to retro gaming another system and certain attitudes that seem to have taken hold over the last few years. Its still pertinent to the gaming community as a whole and is something that we should all strive for.

In a nutshell it alludes that we as gamers contract or pledge to each other that the game we are going to undertake will be fun for all parties involved. That's right ALL, even those of us who lose, and although it's about another system, the spirit of the post can be applied to every game we play. For me that not only means that I need to choose my force carefully, tailoring it to my opponents ability as well as his available miniatures, but in addition I choose to take it a step further and game with only painted miniatures. That's right, no grey or metal "gaming pieces" for us: Painted all the way. And I expect my opponent to do no less.

The reason for this is it acts as a catalyst for you to keep painting, after all, anybody can just buy a ton of toys, poke them on a base and push them about the table. But a GAMER enjoys seeing an army in full color even if it's just a four color minimum with a wash to add shading. Whether it's his army or his opponents, it somehow makes the table come alive, and suddenly you aren't playing a game but witnessing a struggle of good against evil, a clash of mighty generals, you're witnessing history in the making and creating tales that will be told over and over again (especially if you are the winner), and if you want to field that extra unit of knights or that new option to counter your mates

latest purchase, then you have to paint them. It urges you to keep on top of your army and it might (Might being the keyword here!) keep your buying whims in check.

Trust me I'm a firm believer of "if you can't be an example, be a warning" and this is a sure case of that. Ok, so I have a wide and varied collection and can, at the drop of a hat, pull out virtually any type of monster or trooper, paint it up, and shove it in a game… However, I'd much sooner have all my miniatures painted ready to go, than have shelves heaving with unpainted miniatures of all descriptions.

In the meantime may all your die roll high and remember…

The objective of the game is to win. The point of the game is to have fun. The two should never be confused.

TTFN
-Bil

By "left64"

Engineering Special Weapons Corps

By Doug Newton-Walters

Dwarven engineers have developed all manner of strange devices over the centuries, from Garak's famous Longiscope to Finella's terrifying Steam Weevil. However it is in the area of weapons construction that they excel and a special engineering section was created exclusively to develop more powerful weapons of war. It is from this engineering division that such infamous weapons as the Steel Behemoth and Battle Drill were produced.

In their attempt to create ever more portable and potent weapons the special division has produced what they call WMDs, or "weapons of messy destruction". Developed as part of the psychological warfare section, these weapons are intended to sow terror in the enemy ranks by rending their fellows apart in screaming puddles of

Special Weapon Corps*

Large Infantry

Size	Spd	Me	Rn	Def	At	Nv	Cost
Troop (3)	5	4+	-	5+	3D6	11/13	80
Regiment (6)	5	4+	-	5+	6D6	12/14	145
Special:	Crushing Strength (1), Horrifying Weaponry (treat as Musician)						

Options:

Take Pavises (Def 6+ to the front) OR Blasting Tips (Crushing Strength (2)) for 15pts for Troops and 25pts for Regiments.

Take Grapeshot Defenders (treat as Pike Phalanx) for 10pts for Troops and 25pts for Regiments.

gory mush.

The special weapons corps was assembled from seasoned war engineers as a means of practically testing the WMDs. Deployed in loose formation units so as to avoid impaling one another with their varied saws and drills, they have proven devastating if erratic on the battlefield.▪

The Owl and the Blade

By John Hoyland

Part 4

Blade Dance
I

The air was hard and chill. A weak sun sat on the shoulder of the eastern hills and mist clung to the ground. Nothing moved.

And then a shape, silhouetted momentarily against the sun. The briefest of moments – a struck pose, lissom and elegant – and then it was gone. It dropped, seemingly absorbed into the mist.

Another. To the right of the first, similarly lithe.

Another.

Another.

Six, all told. The poses had been deliberate. A reveal. Like a court magician's moment of triumph.

Prasutac saw them all and, through the blear of tired eyes, felt fear at seeing them. The struck poses were predatory and aggressive, the movements feline.

And they were coming this way.

They were a good way off yet, but definitely coming this way.

Shivering – and not just with cold – Prasutac pulled himself to his feet. He cupped his hands and blew warm air into them, then shook them to try to get the blood moving. Then he cupped them again, tighter this time, preparing to blow an owl-call warning to his fellow sentries.

There was a suddenly flurry of movement

By "Dusty"

right in front of him. Prasutac had the vaguest impression of something tall, endlessly graceful and hideously beautiful. And then it was gone.

It was an itch, nothing more. But even as Prasutac raised his hand to scratch at it, the itch roared into sudden pain, hot and vicious

It was only after the shape had vanished that Prasutac felt the merest tickle across his throat. It was an itch, nothing more. But even as Prasutac raised his hand to scratch at it, the itch roared into sudden pain, hot and vicious. Prasutac felt his legs give out from under him and his head go suddenly light.

And then the early morning sun lit the sky bright red; a strong crimson sheet from horizon to horizon. That was bad, Prasutac knew; it heralded poor weather. *Red sky at morn*…

No. It wasn't the sky that was red. Not at all.

II

"All of them?"

"All of them. Throats sliced wide open. Not one of them had a weapon drawn and whoever the attackers were, they left only the slightest footprints. It's almost like they flew in and landed for the merest heartbeat."

By Jonathan Hicks

Deor studied the face of his commander. He could see the anger simmering just below the surface of Breydd's features, but was there, also, the merest hint of fear? Certainly there was something of grudging respect for the skill of whoever had slain the sentries.

"You have the scouts out?" asked Deor.

"Your best rangers are scouring the land for sign of… of whoever did this," said Breydd, "But I have had no word yet."

"Do you think Gratticus King has an army nearby?" asked Areg. He was cradling a cup

By Michael DeFranco

of warm, honeyed wine, hoping it would ward off the morning chill. And the fear.

"Of course he doesn't!" snapped Breydd. "An army we would have seen! No, not an army. But I would stake my brock that Gratticus King doesn't have warriors good enough to sneak up on my sentries like whoever – or whatever – did this."

"You would stake your lover on it? My, Breydd, that's quite a thing for you to do…"

It was Deor who snapped, before Breydd to could rise to Areg's baiting. "Areg! You will retract that and apologise to Breydd! I have warned you before! I will not have bickering and baiting among my council. Your speech will befit one whose station is that of counsellor to a Clan Lord, or you will face sanction. Is that clear?"

Areg stared at his Clan Lord, shock edging his features. "Yes, my Lord," he said at length. "And my apologies, my Lord Breydd. My words were both beneath me and demeaning to you."

Breydd couldn't help but smile his triumph back at Areg. "Apology accepted," he said, offering a short bow to the merchant.

"Good," said Deor. "Now, accepting, as Breydd says, that there is no army out there, we have to ask who or what did this and what they aim to do."

"To sow fear in our ranks?" asked Breydd.
"It's working," said Areg.

Gratticus King doesn't have warriors good enough to sneak up on my sentries like whoever – or whatever – did this

"Undoubtedly to sow fear," agreed Deor. "But to what end?"

"If it was me," said Breydd, reasoning it out, "I would do it to slow a column down: We will move cautiously today and, as news of the slaying spreads, fear will grow among many of the clan. We are in unknown lands and do not know where we travel. Folk are unnerved enough as it is. The slower we move, the easier we are to pick off."

"Or ambush?" quivered Areg.

"Indeed," agreed Deor, "But, as Breydd says,

By "Maccwar"

there is no force – certainly not of Gratticus King's – in these lands to ambush us."

"Could there be another force of orcs out there?" asked Areg. "One that we don't know about."

Breydd shook his head. "Never been known for stealth, orcs," he said. "And the skill of these assassins… I can only think one thing.

"Elves."

Areg felt fear flutter strong in his breast. Not at the thought of an elf army, but at the thought that his Lord might discover – or already know? – his link with the Blade. Might know of his treachery. For all his politician's wiles, he couldn't help but feel that guilt was written all across his features.

"An elf army could hide itself from us, couldn't it?" he asked.

Breydd harrumphed, then grudgingly admitted that such a thing was possible. "Unlikely though," he said.

"So, elves or otherwise," said Areg, "what do they want?"

For all his politician's wiles, he couldn't help but feel that guilt was written all across his features

Breydd answered Areg's question by turning to Deor. "You," he said simply.

"You think so?" asked the Clan Lord.

"I can see the merit in first slowing a column down and then cutting off its head," said Breydd. "Slow *and* leaderless, a column like this would become very easy pickings.

Areg's heart was hammering now. He had no doubt that Breydd had the right of it, but no idea *why*. The Blade had mentioned nothing to him, given no inkling of such a thing being part of any plan; indeed, it seemed to fly in the very face of Areg's understanding of how things were to pan out.

Deor cut across his thoughts. “We move as quickly as we can,” he said. “Certainly we don’t allow the column to slow. Double the guard and have every warrior ensure his axe-hand is itching for action.

He *moved*. To call the movement running would have been to do it an injustice. It was gliding

“And if anyone wishes to come at me – or my Clan – then let them come!”

III

The Blade’s eyes snapped open. He lay utterly motionless, even the beat of his heart slowed to near-stillness.

Something…

Something moving. Stealthy. Expertly so. Nearly good enough that the Blade had missed its presence.

But in the assassin’s business, *nearly* isn’t nearly good enough.

Noiselessly – so noiselessly that, had anyone witnessed it they would have sworn it was impossible to move so completely noiselessly – the Blade swept himself to his feet. He closed his eyes and allowed his head to roll back, nostrils flaring as he breathed deep of the air around him. For a moment he was still. Then his eyes flashed open, his head snapped forward and he *moved*. To call the movement running would have been to do it an injustice. It was gliding.

There were hunters nearby, hunters of a calibre with which the Blade was familiar; they were heading for the refugee train of Deor Ule and they were heading there with murder on their minds. They had not been commissioned by the Blade’s masters, he knew. No others had.

And if their commission did not come from the Blade’s masters, that made them the Blade’s enemies.

IV

Breydd’s assessment had been right; word of the death of the scouts had spread among the people of the Owl and fear had followed. With the fear had come a slowing in the column’s pace; warriors, merchants, smiths, mothers, butchers, leatherworkers, scribes, children, all cast nervous glances around

By “puggimer”

themselves, afraid of the unseen enemy who had so casually slain the sentries in the night. Stories began to circulate. Stories of wizards and abyssals, of black-hearted elves and the dark kin of the dwarfs who dwelled in the north. Eyes were cast northward as the tales were told; northward to where the sky was dark with sulphurous clouds and the underside of those clouds shone orange with flame.

Northward to the reaches of the great Abyss. Deor ordered his counsellors to quash the rumours wherever they came across them and this they faithfully sought to do. Even Areg played his part, although he was careful to sow seeds of doubt among his words, so that those he spoke with were left feeling that they were not being told everything and that those in power knew what it was that stalked them but would not share their knowledge.

By "Dusty"

The assassins struck at dusk, just as the column was in the mess of setting camp. They simply appeared in the middle of the mass of dwarfs, unseen by anyone until they were within striking distance of the dwarf Lord.

They carried long, elegant swords, delicately curved and wicked, single-edged knives, serrated and hooked. They were indiscriminate in the death they dealt; male, female, young, old, unarmed or armed.

Within moments of their appearance, the white robes of the assassins were stained and splattered red

Not that the warriors they encountered fared any better than the young or the old; the six killers moved so swiftly that most foes were dead before they had even realised they were under attack. Within moments of their appearance, the white robes of the assassins were stained and splattered red.

The alarm was raised by a brave cornu player whose life was ended after he had blown no more than a cursory note, but the brief sounding was enough; moments later, Deor, Breydd and a handful of Deor's household guard spilled from Deor's tent, armed for red war. No sooner were the dwarfs out of the tent than the White Ones were cutting a path directly towards them.

"Come then, devils!" roared Deor and, "Ule! Ule!" bellowed Breydd, the household guard taking up the call as they moved towards their attackers.

The assassins were almost impossibly quick. Deor, a warrior of much renown among his kind, was almost undone in the fight's first heartbeat. He swung his axe as he came in range, only to see a wicked cut slicing towards his head. It took all his strength to arrest the momentum of his strike and bring his axe up to block the strike. Even then, only the maille rings of his cote prevented his disembowelling by a slashed knife.

The tip of Deor's axe sliced through cloth and skin, flicking blood into the air

Doer span on his heel as the assassin whispered past. The assassin casually beheaded one of Deor's household guard even as he turned back to the dwarf Lord, cutting with his blade as he turned. Deor stepped in close, using the head of his axe to jab at the assassin; it wasn't a killing strike, nor even one designed to wound, simply to buy a moment's time and possibly knock the wind from his foe. He followed it with an upswing, the speed of which made a mockery of his stocky frame. That surprised the assassin and the white-clad killer wasn't quite quick enough to get out of the way. The tip of Deor's axe sliced through cloth and skin, flicking blood into the air. It was a cut, nothing threatening, but nonetheless the assassin backed off a pace to take stock.

By "imm0rtal reaper"

Deor did likewise, eyes flitting around him. It didn't look good; Deor, Breydd and three of Deor's guard were alone in an ever-moving circle of six dancing killers. The assassins twirled around them, first looking toward their prey, then spinning and ensuring no other foes came close. A loose circle of dwarfs had formed around the assassins, but none dared close with the enemy; here and there was a warrior armed with a crossbow or a handgun, but there was not a hope that they would risk a shot, not with the Lord and his commander in the line of sight.

And then there was another flash of movement.

By "Maccwar"

V

The Blade appeared from nowhere, exploding silently into the heart of the dwarven throng. He swung a slender longsword, beheading the first of the White Ones before the others had even realised he was there.

Three of the White Ones leapt at him, forming a triangle of attack. Their strikes from their weapons came all simultaneously. Against almost any other foe in Mantica, such an attack would have proved impossible to survive, but the Blade was one of the supreme swordsmen of the age. He ducked and lunged, span and parried, attacking and defending with the same stroke, foiling every attack, breaking through every defence. It was exquisite, unbelievable work and the White Ones realised in a heartbeat that they were outclassed. Utterly and completely outclassed.

They knew fear then and it was not a feeling they were accustomed to. Their nerve broke in an instant. They tried to flee but there was no escape; the Blade was total and complete ruthlessness given form. Three heads flew from three necks in what seemed to be a single stroke.

Three heads flew from three necks in what seemed to be a single stroke

The two remaining assassins, still hovering around Deor and his warriors, sprang away, sudden terror giving extra speed to their legs. But no sooner were they a step away from the Owl than the loud retort of several handguns shouted, echoed by the whicker of a half dozen crossbows. Not all the missiles found their mark, but enough did that the pair stumbled then fell. One dropped motionless, the life ripped from him but the other staggered up, body torn, leaking blood profusely. Breydd made to finish him but Deor stopped him.

"The right is mine," he said. He stepped up to the assassin, who tried in vain to ward him off. Deor brushed aside the assassin's hand and kicked him back to the ground.

His axe swung, just once. The wet crunch of the strike made those nearby wince to hear it. Deor took up the severed head and stared

into the dead eyes.

“Elves,” he spat.

“My Lord Deor!” a worried cry made him turn; Areg was hurrying towards him, eyes alight with fear. He took in the carnage around him even as he stepped into the midst of it. “My Lord Deor, are you hurt?”

Doer let fall the elf’s head. “I am not,” he said. “Thanks to him.” He nodded at the tall, purple-clad warrior standing motionless a short distance away.

Areg was hurrying towards him, eyes alight with fear. He took in the carnage around him even as he stepped into the midst of it

Areg turned, noticing the warrior for the first time. The colour drained from his face.

“Hello Areg,” said the Blade. ▪

By Michael DeFranco

Painting Dreadball Corporation Miniatures Step By Step

By Neil Dixon

How do you get your Dreadball miniatures on the board as soon as possible and ready to play? Here I describe how I painted my five Corporation Dreadball models over the course of a few evenings using a straight forward colour scheme. Inspired by the Dreadball Community on the Mantic Forum, I later delve into the background of my team, which I named the 'Bright Knights'.

Painting

I decided on red and silver as two contrasting colours. These are both quick to paint and work well together. I played around with painting different parts of the armour plates in the two colours. I thought separating the shoulders and helmet was just enough red to draw the eye, but at the same time not too much that it dominates the model.

Materials and tools I used:

Dreadball miniatures and bases
Craft knife and file
Acrylic paint – I used a mixture of Citadel paints and Cote d'arms paints.
Superglue
Ready mixed Polyfilla
Spray undercoat – I used Citadel Chaos Black
Pin vice drill and brass rod

1

The metal miniatures are finely detailed, but need preparation before painting.

2

Using the pin vice, I drilled holes underneath the feet. This allowed me to glue in the brass rod so I could mount the miniature on the base. I also shaved off the mould lines with a craft knife at this stage.

3

I sprayed the models Chaos Black and painted the main body area Chainmail.

4

I washed the Chainmail areas with Nuln Oil for shading. The head and shoulders were given a coat of Ceramic White followed by Blood Red.

5

I gave the Chainmail areas another wash of Nuln Oil and shaded the Blood Red with a wash of Agrax Earthshade.

6

I highlighted the raised Blood Red areas with Italian Earth Red.

7

To tone down the orange highlight I washed the red with Ogryn Flesh.

8

I glued the model on the base and used Polyfilla to build up a texture.

9

I finished the base by painting the top Necron Abyss and the edges black. I highlighted the corners with a mixture of Necron Abyss and White Scar.

The Bright Knights painted and set to play Dreadball!

Background for the Bright Knights:

Fans and players alike both curse and praise Bright Knights' owner, Max McMahon. The media producer and company CEO, is well-known for the series 'Day-l'. He has brought glamour and fame to the players, but McMahon's advocates are more selective when voicing the success of the team on the field.

McMahon, an opportunistic money maker, was hooked on the game after a chance meeting with famous Dreadball coach, Simon Sway. One hundred and twenty hours, and a commercial space flight, was all McMahon needed to learn everything he could about Dreadball. Within days of landing he had bought the Bright Knights.

At first the team were enamoured by the new owner. He showered the players with gifts and they soon took to the hedonistic excesses of the media world. After a while the players began to suspect Max did not care about their Dreadball ability. Their training suffered as Max obligated the players to attend his functions and 'entertain' his media friends as guests of honour. All Max wanted was to say that he owned a Dreadball team and capitalise on the extra media coverage to aid the success of his firm, Corp Broadcast Company (CBC).

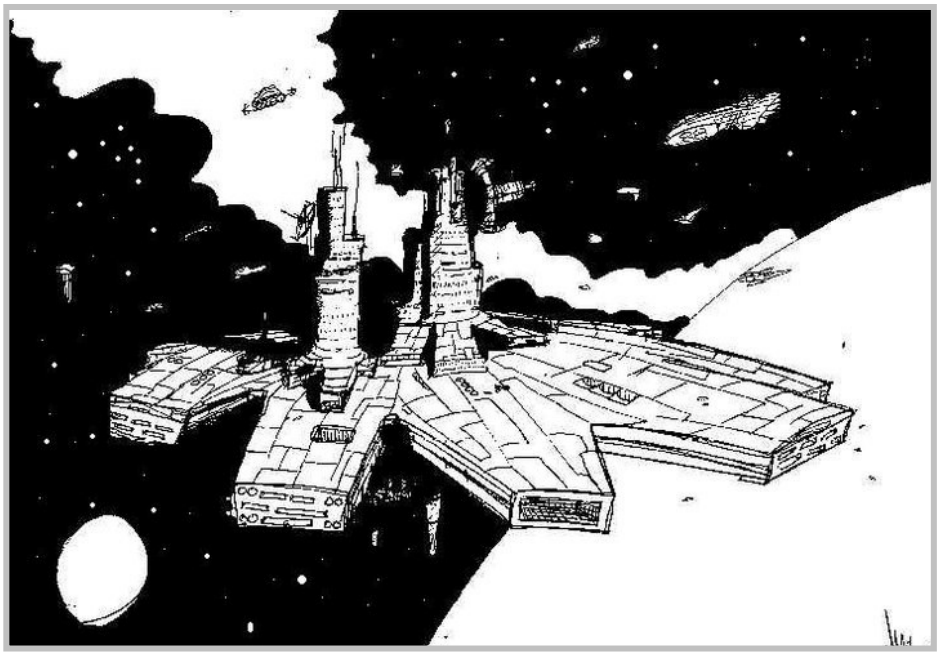
Some of the players realised their plight, and carefully balance training with their media commitments. Others have not been so lucky. The Hot Scott Morgan was a promising Striker. Brought into the team under Coach Justin Steady, the rising star soon developed an appetite for celebrity culture. But after repeatedly falling asleep on the field, with flying balls thrown by his own players even failing to wake him, he was sacked from the team.

Inconsistent team performances have meant results have nosedived. The minor leagues beckon unless new coach, Vince Draystone can elevate the players' performance to the same standard as their fame off the field.

I look forward to reading about more teams on the forum. You never know, the Bright Knights might even get to face one or two and make Dreadball history!▪

END TRANSMISSION

by Michael Grey



By Jonathan Hicks

The following are excerpts from *The Steenkamp Plan: Cover-Ups and Suppression around the Tallaxia Pandemic*, a chronological series of intercepted communications from different Sphere sources at the time of the rumoured Tallaxia Pandemic. The referred to sources, while mostly confirmed independently as actual people or agencies at the time of the outbreak, have never been verified as genuine and should be handled appropriately.

The book is banned Sphere-wide, and rumoured to be listed on the Council Protection Agency's so-called *black library* of prohibited texts. Because of this it is recommended this file is read while disconnect from the net.

FROM: THE OFFICE OF FRANCIS IBRAHIM, CHIEF OFFICER – INTER-CORPORATION RELATIONS
TO: CONNER JAMESON, MINISTRY OF EXTRAPLANETARY AFFAIRS
SUBJECT: POINT OF INTEREST (EYES ONLY)

Good morning, Conner

I'll get straight to the point; if anyone else is in the room with you, ask them to leave now. I know how you like your emails read to you, but this is important.

Okay? Good.

Do you remember the sub-space emergency messaging system you championed a few years ago? I know it was voted out as too expensive, but, well… look, I'm not proud of it, but the CPA appropriated the idea and ran with it. Hands on the table, I knew about the project and was even involved with the facilitation. I know it was your baby, and you were right, it would be a boon to the Sphere, but it was deemed too important to be trusted with civilian bureaucrats. That's why the Protection Agency was brought in.

If it helps sooth your ego any, the whole thing was set up and tested to perfection. The damn thing works, and if it wasn't for you, we wouldn't have it. I hope you

understand. Politics and all that. Anyway, I'm not mailing you to apologise, I'm mailing you because it *went off*.

This is so fresh and hush-hush the whole thing doesn't even have a code name yet, but I'm sure you'll be brought on down the line, but just remember who let you in beforehand, all right?

The alert came from some backwater called Tallaxia, out somewhere deep on the Gum Nebula. Only planet in the system, been in the Sphere close to a century and listed as Compliant for over fifty years, and set as Class Five for nearly all of those. The only reason such a shithole of a planet's been doing so well is it's the closest landfall for the dust clouds of the Vela Molecular Ridge. Enough mineral credits have been running through that place to make a core world blush, and now it has over eight billion people on it.

Well... it *had.* As of yesterday the jury's out on exactly how many there are now.

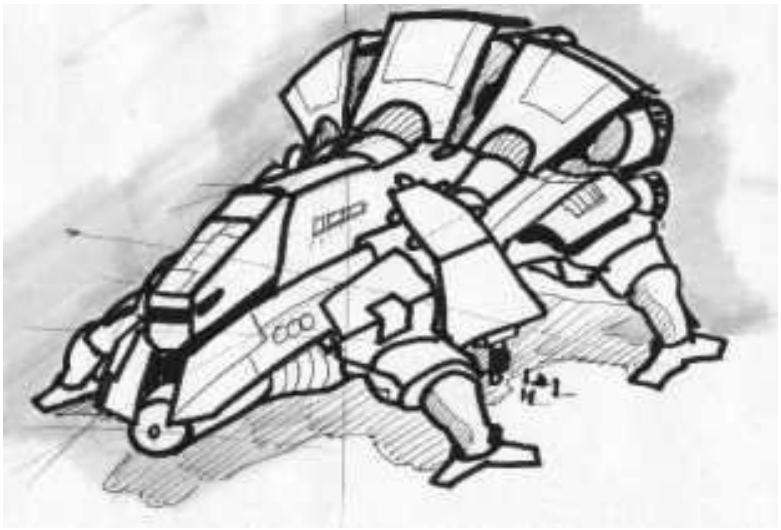
The brass is a bit worried. Seems there was a battalion of marines on-planet. Nothing hardcore, really no more than a staging ground to give new blood out of the academy chance to experience a posting before being sent somewhere more active. But still, enough firepower to put up serious resistance in case of anything up to and including a hostile planetary invasion.

But as of yesterday, there may as well be no-one there for all the comms we're getting.

That would be worrying enough. Eight billion people come with some serious infrastructure, and there are even civilian stations which could send comm waves far enough out to the Kumovan system, the next closest. But no, nothing.

But that wasn't what really set the hairs on

By "Skolo"



By Jonathan Hicks

the back of my neck prickling.

You want to know what was?

The message is a single use, one direction packet which can arrive within days to the target receiver up to nearly a billion AUs away. It goes through sub-space, but tears through it at such a rate that anyone monitoring the area would pick up the disturbance and could potentially intercept. There are, of course, safe guards. The messages are encrypted, read only and double coded.

But still, the packet arrived intact, but the thing is… it was empty. Nothing in it, nada.

Right now all the chatter in house is about what this could mean. You can imagine. On one hand we have the usual, "this is nothing to worry about. Just a misfire of the first use of a new tech, and ion storms causing havoc with comms". These are all the elected officials, of course. The people who need popular support to pad out their retirement funds.

And then you have the people advocating a complete armed tactical response, pushing the worst case scenario; full loss of a class five world.

What is thin on the ground though are reasons why the beacon was used at all, and the lack of response from Tallaxia. Even the military with their gung-ho we-can-handle-anything bullshit, are at a loss. The area is too far off the trade routes for pirates, even if they were able to take a whole planet off line. And it's at the other side of the galactic core, so we can rule out any interference from any other capable civ.

Nothing about this sits well, and you know what they say about misery? Well, I guess the same is true for nerves. This is going to be big, I just know it, but right now it's like we're crippled with indecision.

A marine battalion has been dispatched to investigate, they should be there in forty-eight hours. Maybe I'll be proved wrong and it was just ion storms and false alarms.

But I don't think so.

Look, don't mention this to anyone, okay? I'll speak to you soon. My love to Judith.

Frank.

****TRANSMISSION BEGINS****

LOC: 45KKI-JUUB8-JH89N
STAMP: 3511050Z 15:35:41GST

HOST: STRIKE CRUISER 'SOUTHERN CROSS'
OPERATION: LANDFALL
ADMIRAL JESSOP CRAWLON, COMMANDER, 3RD ARMOURED INFANTRY BATTALLION, HOUSE FRISSURE LTD.
MESSAGE START:

Arrived in Tallaxia's outer orbit at 0301GST, 2532ZULU. Proceeded with standard practice for possible hostile zone. Our arrival was not broadcast and local authorities not alerted to our presence.

Initial low range sweeps showed limited electromagnetic activity in Tallaxia's atmosphere, with no increase after our anchorage. Stronger scans confirmed indication our arrival had gone unnoticed.

Initial electromagnetic signatures that of geosynchronous satellites and guidance drones. Nothing manned. Latent radiation waves showed some craft had recently made sub-space jumps, although their signatures showed them to be nothing larger than personal transports, and nothing equipped to make the journey to Kumovan, the nearest system, and that many of those were not even aimed in that direction. Their current positions are unknown.

Some larger vessels remain in orbit, and, although they exhibit no outer signs of damage and of full operation, they do not respond to hails. Further scans showed no signs of life onboard.

Scans of planet display indication of mass conflict, clustered around large population centres. The countryside [TAG NOTE: Tallaxia is registered as a Temperate Range Three climate. No ice caps, major landmasses differing between open plain and thick coniferous forests] appears empty of human habitation, although concentrations of open radiation suggest thermonuclear explosions have occurred recently in several areas.

Massed weapon signatures are registering within major city boundaries, apparently without pattern, but with no let up in firing rates. Lines of weapon discharges suggest a battle line of roughly spherical shape, ringed around the city's centre and slowly contracting. The pattern is repeated in all cities, and indicate a battle being lost swiftly by one side.

That loss of life is in process, and on a mass scale, is evident. However orders are to gather intel before action, and as the infrastructure is mostly intact, nothing is occurring to countermand that order.

More records to follow.

Crawlon out.

MESSAGE ENDS

By "Skolo"

ADENDUM

LOC: 45KKI-JUUB8-JH890
STAMP: 35110502 19:18:02GST
HOST: STRIKE CRUISER 'SOUTHERN CROSS'
OPERATION: LANDFALL
ADMIRAL JESSOP CRAWLON, COMMANDER, 3RD ARMOURED INFANTRY BATTALLION, HOUSE FRISSURE LTD.
MESSAGE START:

All conflict on Tallaxia's surface has ceased. The alarm was raised at 1900GST and confirmed two minutes later. Within four hours of arrival, it appears the massed battles in all of Tallaxia's urban centres has ended.

Scans show no life signs within cities or towns.

The command team, lead by myself and Rear Admiral Coltrane, have run several scenarios to locate the winning side, but so far have no satisfactory theory.

Coltrane suggested we request permission to enact the Steenkamp Plan. I overruled him. The planet's core structures and administration is still over 77% intact, so it will not be levelled from space.

Captain Bezus has been ordered to gather a landing platoon to launch by 2000GST. The mission is to scout the countryside near Octaga, Tallaxia's capital on its southern

By Jonathan Hicks

continent.

More to follow.

MESSAGE ENDS

****END TRANSMISSION****

FROM: THE OFFICE OF GUSTAV KALPREET, GOVERNOR KUMOVAN III AND SYSTEM. REPRESENTATIVE; HOUSE FRISSURE LTD.
TO: CAROLYN MOSES, HEAD INNER RIM COLONY SUPPORT; HOUSE FRISSURE LTD.
SUBJECT: ESCALATION IN INCIDENT: INC452246

Dear Carolyn

I know you said not to worry, but I have to report this. The numbers of the Brethren have escalated in the past week, and they've taken to calling themselves the Temple of

Last Days. If that's not an indication of their intent I don't know what is.

I swear there's something in the air here. They held a big open air rally in Montanga Square two days ago. I know, I know. All the procedures say to deny cults publicity, but what was I supposed to do? I don't have the security forces to control a crowd that size if they rioted.

The rally turned into a mass recruitment drive, and now one in every five people on the street is wearing their badge or that ridiculous hood they wear.

And their preaching is getting more specific. They're promising the 'death of all life' within weeks, or that a plague will engulf all humanity, or some such.

You said there was a marine battalion in the area. I can't promise I can control the situation anymore, it's gotten too big for that. Can I ask you… no, forget that. I *need* those marines here. It frightens me to think what's gotten into these people, but not more than what they are capable of.

Please, just send them.

Gustav Kalpreet

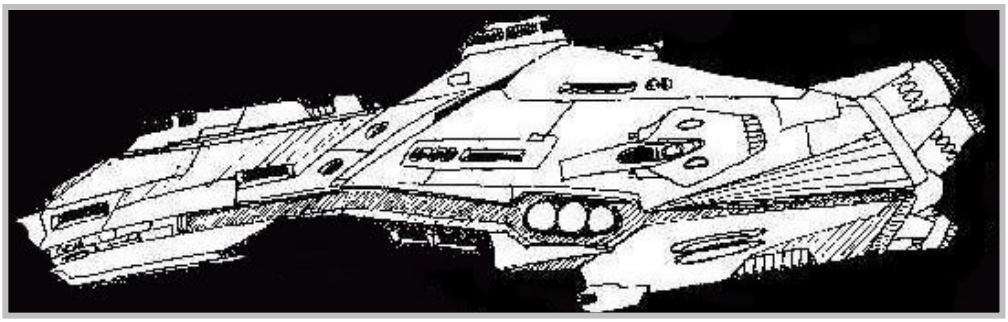
Editor's note: Hours after sending the above message, the Kumovan-based cult known as the Temple of Last Days *stormed the water purification plant in Montanga, Kumovan's capital, and flooded the city's fresh water supply with VX nerve agent. The plumbing took the agent into every building connected throughout the city. Official casualties were listed as 15,587,411 dead, 3 injured. Among the casualties was Governor Kalpreet.*

****TRANSMISSION BEGINS****

LOC: 45KKI-JUUBB-JH891
STAMP: 35110502 20:36:03GST / 03:05:03ZULU
HOST: TALLAXIA 789:753
OPERATION: LANDFALL
CAPTAIN ANTON BEZUS, COMMANDING OFFICER CHARLIE PLATOON, 3RD ARMOURED INFANTRY BATTALION, HOUSE FRISSURE LTD.
MESSAGE START:

Landfall made 2020GST, 36kms northeast of Octaga, Tallaxia's capital.

By "Skolo"



By Jonathan Hicks

Orders are to secure beachhead, scout surrounding area and to avoid hostile forces if possible. Intel shows of mass conflict in built urban areas has ceased and the current position of antagonists is unknown. Extreme caution has been advised.

Because of the above our insertion zone was shifted to the more rural north. Landing site a clearing in thick forest. No signs of nearby habitation. Initial sweeps on instruments and by scouts report no activity nearby.

Data shows an airfield to south. Will recon the site for possible baseop before moving on Octaga.

More to follow.

MESSAGE ENDS

****END TRANSMISSION****

R&D PROJECT SITE 51 : PERSONAL RESEARCH LOG DR XIAO NGU
35110420

Progress! The substrain has shown surprising reliance today. It appears Dr Praneel's suggestion of preserving the virus in refrigeration was what held us back. The cold did not kill the strain in itself, merely laid it dormant (apparently indefinitely as far as we know. Note to self; this will have to be looked into separately), however prolonged exposure to room temperature after thawing without a host leads of comparatively rapid degeneration.

At Dr Praneel's urging, we allowed the test subjects to house the virus unimpeded, and what do you know? It worked!

Appearances suggest a life cycle, albeit an exceedingly brief one, allows the strain to mingle with the host tissue (primarily the of the brain and muscle), resulting in the desired results.

Subjects show a marked increase in tensile and muscle strength, and also a single mindedness required for combat operations. I believe we all earned a night off after this one.

Some side effects, to note. Subjects became exceedingly aggressive, combined with an apparent loss in the ability to communicate verbally. This will prove to be a major hurdle if not addressed in future iterations. I can hear them now, hissing and moaning in the cells.

I think this batch is beyond usefulness. The supply shuttle from the 35th should arrive tomorrow with supplies and, hopefully, more

prison- I'm sorry, I can't concentrate with all that banging! Note to self: see with maintenance if we can reinforce the one-way mirrors.

LOC: 45KKI-JUUBB-JHBIDI
STAMP: 35110503 01:06:36GST / 25:14:17ZULU
COMM MEMCARD: CAPTAIN ANTON BEZUS, COMMANDING OFFICER CHARLIE PLATOON, 3RD ARMOURED INFANTRY BATTALION

****TRANSMISSION BEGINS****

--Come in SOUTHERN CROSS, this is Captain Bezus. Copy?

--Captain this is Operator Jonsan of the SOUTHERN CROSS, please state your mission code word.

By "Skolo"

---mmit! Rolling!

--Thunder. Thank you, Captain. Please state your situation.

--Have contacted hostile forces [recording shows heavy breathing]. Losses heavy. Upwards of eighty, repeat 8-0, percent with more MIA. We're falling back to initial insertion point. Requesting air cover for extraction. Copy?

--Captain, the Admiral will have to approve Strike Bomber launches.

--Then get him [CENSORED] online!

[Pause in recording. A different voice replaces Operator Jonsan]

--This is Admiral Crawlon.

-- Admiral, we require air support for immediate extraction. We have suffered heavy losses we- [recording breaks here for a moment, lost in static and the punch of automated gunfire] –ing gone. The whole of Octaga is gone, Admiral.

--What do you mean gone, Captain?

--I mean lost, sir. Enemy saturation is total.

--And who is the enemy?

--Not sure, sir. They're fast. Very fast, and take too many shots to down. We're running low on ammo. We didn't equip for an all out conflict. [recording breaks into static here as the audio input is overloaded by what

sounds like an animalistic scream] I'll be happy to give my full report on board, Admiral.

--…Survivors?

--[Laughing] I doubt it.

--Very well, Captain. Support incoming. Hold tight, son.

****END TRANSMISSION****

****TRANSMISSION BEGINS****

LOC: 45KKI-JUUBB-JH890
STAMP: 35110503 02:56:54GST / 28:45:54ZULU
HOST: STRIKE CRUISER 'SOUTHERN CROSS'
OPERATION: LANDFALL
ADMIRAL JESSOP CRAWLON, COMMANDER, 3RD ARMOURED INFANTRY BATTALLION, HOUSE FRISSURE LTD.
MESSAGE START:

Gentlemen and Madam Councillors,

Thank you for your time and attention. You will find attached the video debrief of Captain Anton Bezus of the House Frissure Marine Corps. Captain Bezus lead an expeditionary tip onto the surface of Tallaxia, and I suggest you review the video before reading my recommendations.

Captain Bezus, and the words of the returning marines, paint a dire picture which

By Jonathan Hicks

some would find barely believable. However at the Captain's insistence we have launched several remotely controlled spy drones into the lower atmosphere, and the intel they returned do nothing to dispute their statements.

Sirs and Madam; Tallaxia is lost. The enemy are too numerous to count, and their attire and numbers suggest they can only be Tallaxia's recent citizens. They exhibit extreme aggression, and an inability to communicate and reason. Whatever is afflicting them appears to suppress their nerve centres, resulting in an inordinate

amount of firepower to individually eliminate. Attempts to secure specimens via limited landings have resulted in more loss of personnel with zero enemy captured.

Clean up operation would take decades, and initial cost in materials alone is projected in the trillions, not to mention the inevitable loss to manpower.

It is my recommendation that the Steenkamp Plan be enacted, and the planet quarantined until the fallout has passed.

This is my own recommendation, and also that of Captain Bezus, currently recovering in sick bay with some of his men with injuries sustained in the escape.

I will prepare the bombards and await permission.

Admiral Crawlon.

MESSAGE ENDS

****END TRANSMISSION****

****TRANSMISSION BEGINS****

LOC: -WITHHELD-
STAMP: 35110505 18:30:14GST
HOST: -DESIGNATION WITHHELD- 'CRUSADER'
CAPTAIN PAWL, ENFORCER TACTICAL SECTION 'HAMMER'
MESSAGE START:

Orders received:

Relocate with all haste to Tallaxia (LOC:45KKI-JUUB8-JH89N)

[CHECK]

Scout and report condition of planet and inhabitants

[CHECK]

Investigate communication blackout with House Frissure strike cruiser SOUTHERN CROSS

[CHECK]

Hostiles expected, proceed with extreme caution

[CHECK]

By "Skolo"

Course plotted and ready to execute.

Pawl out.

MESSAGE ENDS

****END TRANSMISSION****

****TRANSMISSION BEGINS****

FROM: THE OFFICE OF JAIME SHARPE, GOVERNOR SYRUS V. SYSTEM REPRESENTATIVE; THE HENSCHU CONGLOMERATE
TO: CONNER JAMESON, MINISTRY OF EXTRAPLANETARY AFFAIRS
SUBJECT: AID REQUEST (SENT WITH HIGH IMPORTANCE)

Dear Conner

Please consider this an official request for aid. We've been receiving refugees from Kumovan III, Syrus's nearest neighbour under the House Frissure hegemony. They began arriving two days ago, in ones and twos, but now their thousands. We can handle the influx right now, but if it continues we're going to run into food problems, and next month is the beginning of Syrus's monsoon season. I believe this request is early enough to give us some leeway, but please hurry.

It looks as if Kumovan is in the middle of some kind of civil war. I can't say I'm surprised. Kalpreet was not suited to the position, but that's Frissure's problem, not ours.

Also, we've received two escape shuttles from Tallaxia. I'm aware of the general order not to allow ships from there into orbit, but the automated scans showed no weapons, only injured people in stasis, so I had them land and placed on medical watch. I'll send a full report on what they have to say when they wake up.

Regards,
Jaime Sharpe.

****END TRANSMISSION****

For more stories like this, be sure to visit Michael's blog at www.michaelgrey.com.au

By Jonathan Hicks

salvage mission:

a warpath scenario

by Stuart Smith.
(All figures also painted by Stuart Smith)

The basic idea behind this scenario was hatched one evening as I was driving along to have a game of Warpath with my usual group of friends. It was only our second ever game and when we played the scenario that first time it didn't seem quite balanced (I would say that as I lost) and the opposing side easily ran away with the mission objective. Here I present the re-hashed and hopefully more enjoyable and evenly balanced version.

A top secret un-manned military drone has been shot down in hostile territory. The mission is to recover as many pieces of technologically useful wreckage as you can and exit the table, scoring Victory Points for the amount of wreckage you recover. The side with the most Victory points is the winner!

Game Length and Army Size

Players are to choose forces of an equal size and the game is to last at least 5 turns. After 5 turns throw a dice, on a 1,2 or 3 the game ends but on a 4,5 or 6 play another turn and then the game ends.

Corporation Heavy Weapons

The objective markers captured by Corporation Rangers.

Set Up

You will need 6 objective markers. These need to be place randomly across the table to represent the wreckage from the drone. Players should take turns to position a marker, making sure they are at least 6" apart. The objective markers should be placed in the central section of the table, outside army set-up areas, within 6" of the middle line but not in impassable terrain.

I made my six objective markers from bits of old plastic Battletech robots and a couple of pieces of sci-fi style girder/fencing glued onto 3cm washers. Although I made them for this scenario I am sure they will come in useful in many other games and so were well worth the effort.

Players should set up terrain in a mutually agreeable manner and then dice for Set-up area in the normal manner.

This wreckage is highly valuable but also potentially very dangerous. To capture a piece of wreckage a player need just move one of his units into contact with the marker but then he needs to throw a dice with the following results…

1: BOOM! The wreckage explodes with a Blast D6 effect, Piercing 1-6 (throw a D6 to decide).
2-5: A useful piece of wreckage worth 1 Victory point.
6: A most important piece of wreckage worth 2 Victory points.
Note: that this dice throw is only made when an objective marker is first captured.

Of course players may wish to fight over control of the various bits of wreckage. They are so valuable they dare not destroy them and if one player defeats another players unit that is in control of a piece of wreckage then possession passes to the winner of the melee. If a unit in possession of a piece of wreckage is destroyed by missile fire, the wreckage is left where the unit was shot down and the first unit to move into contact with it gains control over it.

Victory!

At the end of the last turn total up how many objective marker victory points you have managed to get off table and double that score. Now add on the normal victory points for any objective markers in your possession but still on the table. The player with the highest overall score is the winner!

Corporation Marines Advance

THE 42ND ENFORCER REGIMENT "HEADHUNTERS"

By Doug Newton-Walters

responsum ad vitam
universum et omnia

The Enforcer regiments are an unknown quantity. Despite the number of holovid exposes, liquidated recon teams and alien spytech deployed by News Corps, alien militaries and even other arms Corporations, no reliable information has been uncovered regarding these fearsome warriors.

That hasn't stopped the galactic hypertabloids from inventing all manner of outlandish conspiracies in order to sell airtime. It's no surprise that Enforcer related holovids are always in the top five most profitable programs of the night.

One of the most popular stories is that of the 42nd regiment, nicknamed 'Headhunters'. Whether that's their actual designation is unknown, although that number has appeared in purportedly genuine vid feeds of the regiment in action. Regimental insignia has been associated with them, although the troops are never seen to display any themselves.

In fact the 'guerrilla vids' smuggled out for mainstream consumption depict a force far plainer than most people expect, but all the

more unsettling as a result. The 42nd wear matt black armour and skull faced helmets to intimidate their opponents, supposedly harking back to the dividend poor superstitions of old. They bear no obvious insignia and the harsh red glow of their power generators and weapons are all that illuminates their uncompromising appearance.

According to the hypertabloids, the 42nd specialises in head hunter missions as part of Corporate Downsizing Operations. This apparently enables them to test their metal against the elite troops of other Corporation forces.

The holovids might be real, but they lack any audio. Many fans watch the Enforcer vids just for the hilariously bad overdubbing, with invented military terminology and increased squad drama to add the 'authentic' feel.

Needless to say, there are many fans out there that claim everything is true and the Corporation are deliberately pretending it's fake to throw off their enemies. Yet other factions insist it's all an elaborate docudrama as part of an experiment in human gullibility studies to increase production sales.

Painting

when I put these models together I was really unsure how to paint them. They contain an insane amount of detail and I wasn't sure where to begin. I was thinking a matt black/grey would be good, but was unsure about whether to paint separate sections different colours. In the end I opted for red glowing lights and a stylised white skull face as the only other colours. The intention was to give them a more realistic

spec-op sort of appearance with the unadorned style, making the helmet at lights stand out more.

For the bases I wanted a kind of rusted industrial waste, like they were stalking a fleeing CEO through the ruins of a megacorp. I wanted to flatten the bases without gluing anything to them so I mixed some Talcum powder with watered down PVA and used it as a runny paste to fill the gap in the base where the integral base is glued. This worked out fairly well, although I'd probably use more talc for my other units.

Then I glued random bits of plasticard, plastic girders, rods etc. to give the industrial look. Gluing it on with superglue (due to the pva being in the way and the restic integral base) meant I could stick sand to the edges of the pieces, to give them impression of them having sat there for a while.

First I sprayed them with my trusty Export matt black spray (see my Dwarf Driller article). Once this was done, I wet brushed them with Vallejo Game Colour Heavy Charcoal. This is a dark grey that works well as a 'soft' black. I then washed the whole model with Vallejo Wash Black Shade.

This is where it got really tedious. Trying to highlight all those plates and parts in black got old fast. I put the first layer on, mixing Vallejo Game Colour Bonewhite* with the Heavy Charcoal and began building it up but before I'd finished I gotten bored.

So I decided I'd try drybrushing instead. However I was leery of producing the grainy effect that drybrushing produces so I was trying to figure out how best to do it. In the end I used a large soft brush and used paint that was between a drybrush and a wet brush (see my Dwarf Driller article).

**I've found that mixing yellow-white (bleached bone or bonewhite) with black to produce highlights works better than just using white. The yellow makes the highlight a bit more subdued, and gives a more natural appearance.*

So I tried gently brushing the whole model with that, focusing on getting the edges and ridges of plates. It worked, although the highlights were quite strong. There was a limited amount of the grainy effect which was good. So I used the Black Shade to tone down the highlights. Then applied a lighter brush to get select highlight areas back.

The helmets were painted along the fronts with white, making sure to only paint the bottom jaw and leave the middle of the face black to represent a stylised nasal opening. The thin panel lines along the front were picked out with Black Shade.

All the red lights were painted Vallejo Game Colour Gory Red, then highlighted with Game Colour Bloody Red. Some thin highlights mixing Model Colour Salmon Rose were applied in some areas.

To produce the glowing affect I simply drybrushed Bloody Red around the lit areas. For the jump packs this was down the back in two lines, making sure to leave the undersides of the plates dark.

The bases were drybrushed with Gunmetal Metal and then stippled Heavy Sienna and Heavy Ochre to give a dirty rusty appearance. The whole base was washed with Game Ink Skin Wash to dull it down.

I then drybrushed Bloody Red on the base to appear as though it was shining from the ankle lights. A final mix with Salmon Rose was added to add the spot highlight.▪

HERO SHEET

STATLINE

Sp	Me	Ra	De	At	Ne

SPECIAL RULES

SKILLS

Agility _____

Artisan ( ) _____

Charisma _____

Hide/Sneak _____

Locks and Traps _____

Lore _____

Medicine _____

Perception _____

Ride _____

Strength _____

Water Craft _____

EXPERIENCE

EQUIPMENT

MONEY

By Darren Lysenko

Inside:

Kings of War RPG

Create a hero to battle through the dungeons and forests of Mantica, and then include this brave individual in your Kings of War army for fame and glory...

Tân-y-loar , Part II

The conclusion to the story of the headstrong young Human and the Elven maiden he saved from the monsters of the forest…

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See the 'Bright Knights' Dreadball team, and learn how to paint them in this tutorial...

END TRANSMISSION

A world goes silent in a distant star system, and what the Corporation armies sent to investigate find will change the universe of Warpath forever…

And much more!